Football Coca-Cola Cup final: Leicester City 1 Middlesbrough 1

Heskey has the final say

David Lacey

AN EXHAUSTED fox refused to be run to ground at Wembley on Sunday. Just when Middlesbrough thought they had won the Coca-Cola Cup, and with it a place in Europe next season, Emile Heskey gave Leicester City another chance with a goal two minutes from the end of extra time.

The first replayed final the tournament has seen for 13 years will be at Hillsborough on April 16. It can hardly fail to be an improvement on the original. Take away the drama of Heskey's late equaliser and this was a Coke badly in need of rum accompaniment.

Until the 19-year-old forced the ball over the goal-line, the game had produced just one telling glimpse of Italian silver on an afternoon of largely unremitting grey. Having headed against a post and then missed a sitter, Fabrizio Ravanelli appeared to have won Middlesbrough their first major trophy when he put them ahead in the fourth minute of extra time.

For organisation, determination and sheer bloody-mindedness Leicester City deserved their reprieve. They had set out to deny Juninho space and block his usual channels. Pontus Kaamark, a single-minded Swede, was assigned to dog his footsteps, and did so to such stifling effect that, at times, the Brazilian must have thought that he was playing a team of Kaamarks, so often was the defender barring his way.



Final battle . . . Festa, left, tussles with Heskey, the scorer of Leicester's late equaliser, at Wembley PHOTOGRAPH: BEN RADFORD

Deprived of Juninho's influence, Middlesbrough struggled to find alternative routes through the blue thicket of bodies that Leicester habitually massed behind the ball. Robson's team did not have natural width, yet at one point in the second half, and again after they had fallen behind in extra time, it seemed that Leicester's workload had proved too much for O'Neill's side on Wembley's tiring pitch.

The way they play demands a lot of running, both from the midfield players and from the front two, Claridge and Heskey. The latter, limping after a tackle in the 10th minute, seemed an obvious candidate for substitution. Luckily O'Neill did not agree.

The first sign of a break in the stalemate, after the goalkeepers Keller and Schwartz had enjoyed a fairly trouble-free first-half, came on the hour, when Kaamark managed to get in front of Juninho to deny him a goal from Ravanelli's centre. Four minutes later, after Claridge had nodded the ball back, Heskey's header clipped the Middlesbrough crossbar.

In the 77th minute Ravanelli glanced Hignett's cross back past Keller only to see the ball rebound from a post. Then in the third minute of extra time the Italian striker failed to beat Keller after Beck's canny, dipping cross had set him up from point-blank range.

A minute later, however, Middlesbrough were in front. At last the combination of Juninho and Ravanelli proved irresistible. After Juninho had burst through the Leicester defence, Lennon's half-clearance came straight out to Ravanelli, whose strong left foot did the rest.

Surely Leicester were done for; they looked all in. But the introduction of Robins gave their attack a fresh pair of legs for the final quarter of an hour and eventually he instigated a goal with a cross from the right-hand byline.

Walsh nodded the centre back from the far post, Heskey's header came back off the bar and, although Claridge could not force in the rebound, Heskey eventually bundled the ball into the net.

So Middlesbrough left Wembley still trophy-less and, courtesy of Coventry City's win at Liverpool, back in the Premiership's bottom three. Thus Riverside's season remains full of potential ups and downs.

Squash British Open

Nicol tests Jansher to the limit

Richard Jago in Cardiff

PETER NICOL forced Jansher Khan to the longest and hardest match he has played in the British Open before losing a 126-minute five-game contest containing patches of sublime squash, a plague of unnecessary lets, a sequence of disruptive disputes that threatened to get out of hand and a thrilling finish.

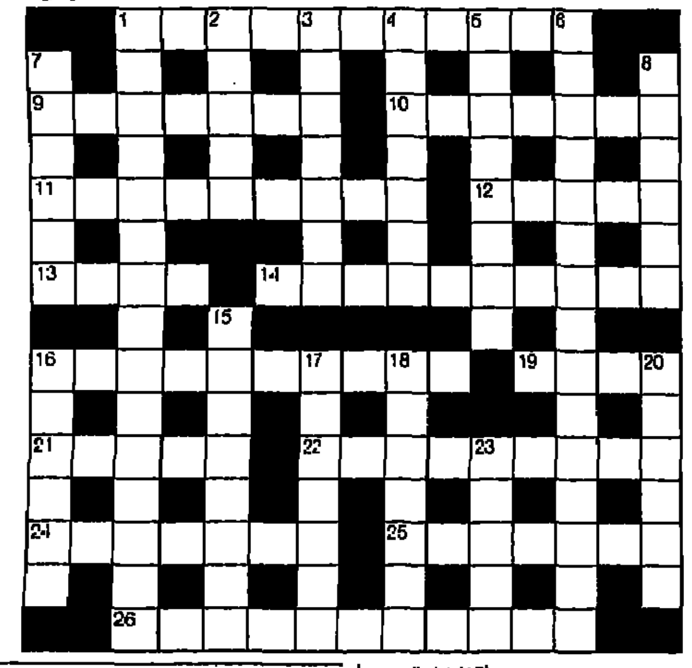
The left-handed Briton, who celebrated his 24th birthday by becoming the first Scot for 33 years to reach the final of the competition, lost to the great Pakistani 17-15, 9-15, 15-12, 8-15, 15-8 but had led 8-7 in the final game and for much of the evening looked capable of one of the greatest upsets in the game's history.

Jansher took his sixth successive British Open because, as he said "I got a couple of lucky penalty strokes at the end. I was very patient and I was mentally strong."

In fact, Jansher had not been so lucky with some of the earlier decisions, which remarkably proliferated to 33 penalty strokes and 132 lets. Once Nicol's father stood up in the front row to yell at the referee. It was difficult to believe that they are normally two of the least demonstrative players on the circuit.

● In the women's final, the defending champion Michelle Martin beat the top-seeded world Open champion fellow-Australian Sarah Fitz-Gerald 9-5, 9-10, 9-5, 9-5.

Cryptic crossword by Chifonie



Across

1 A burglar's not dangerous, given a wave (4-7)
9 Student deserved to be erudite (7)
10 Happy to handle carry-out? That's a turnaround! (7)
11 Free again, wild deer survive by the river (9)
12 A couple of students in time to linger (5)
13 String, binding pole or spike (4)
14 Advocate retains non-professional child minder (4,6)
16 Dowagers take ill having installed new shelf under the light (10)
19 Join maiden after drink (4)
21 Is the girl to come out? (5)
22 He'll rapidly increase coal rates indiscriminately (9)
24 Tax relationship with dog (7)
25 Garden centre in north Surrey destroyed (7)
26 It's not the best form to follow an assistant (6,5)

Down

1 Son's too tense and disturbed to stretch up (5,2,4,4)
2 The ultimate caveman lacks gravity (5)
3 Plot that's malicious creates trouble (7)
4 Great bridge player enters before the allotted time with zeal (7)
5 Want to be in stronghold being heavily involved (4-4)
6 Bird's persuaded down, showing signs of irritation (7,8)
7 Cambridge college has tiptop wine (6)
8 An artist for each accepted song (6)
15 Benedictine cites unruly servant (8)
16 It's quaint to see that fellow in the West Seychelles (6)
17 Booze's been supporting the woman (7)
18 Sententious amateur entraps swindler (7)
20 Master of the Rolls protected affectedly cultured sufferer (6)
23 Grub for batsman snatching victory (5)

Last week's solution

C	O	S	T	A	R			C	U	R	R	I	E	S
H		T		G		M		A		E		N		C
E	V	E	R	G	R	E	E	N		P	A	T	C	H
A		E		R		A		D		E		R		E
P	U	R	G	E		G	R	I	L	L	R	O	O	M
E				G		R		D				D		E
R	A	D	I	A	T	E		A	V	E	N	U	E	
		I		T						D		C		
	A	S	S	E	S	S		U	S	U	R	E	R	S
S		M				T		R		C				H
P	R	E	S	S	G	A	N	G		A	L	I	C	E
A		M		K		R		E		T		D		L
R	A	B	B	I		C	O	N	T	I	N	E	N	T
T		E		M		H		T		O		A		E
A	T	R	O	P	H	Y			A	N	G	L	E	R

Wisden throws the book at England cricket team

Mike Selvey

WHEN Sri Lanka lifted the World Cup little more than 12 months ago, not only did it jolt English cricket out of its smug torpor but it initiated a change in one of the game's oldest institutions.

Since 1889 Wisden's five Cricketers of the Year have been selected largely on the basis of performances in the previous English summer.

The 134th edition of the yellow book, published last week, breaks with tradition and names the Sri Lankan batsman Sanath Jayasuriya, alongside Saeed Anwar, Mushtaq Ahmed, Sachin Tendulkar and Phil Simmons as its five.

It is only the third time that no English-qualified player has been honoured.

Jayasuriya did not play in England last summer but it was his phenomenal hitting that had such an influence on the outcome of the World Cup.

Sri Lanka's wonderful win not only served to highlight the predicament that the domestic game is in; it also offered further compelling evidence of the power base that is being established on the subcontinent.

Mihir Bose, a writer on the politics of sport, explains how the vast sums which are generated by the game in India and Pakistan — the World Cup hosts pocketed profits of around £30 million from the competition — are helping these nations challenge the traditional centres of power.

Matthew Engel, in his Editor's Notes, views the state of English cricket as "potentially catastrophic", citing the failure of the national team as a major cause of crisis. He also suggests the game in general, perceived as élitist, exclusionist and dull, does little to endear itself to the British public.

Engel suggests that the game needs to become "Tesco-ised: an attractive product, sold in an imaginitive manner at competitive prices".

That being the case, there is no one better qualified to do it than the first chairman of the new England and Wales Cricket Board, Lord MacLaurin, who retires shortly as head of that supermarket chain.

MacLaurin offers a manifesto for English cricket, in which to maintain the support of sponsors, television and the public, the success of the national side is paramount. He hints that the Cricket Board may be prepared to pursue radical policies to ensure that.

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The Washington Post · Le Monde

Zaire rebels set sights on capital

Chris McGreal in Lubumbashi

REBELS in eastern Zaire said last weekend that high-level talks with the government of President Mobutu Sese Seko could be held soon in South Africa. But they vowed simultaneously that the war would resume, and continue until the Zairean dictator agreed to relinquish power.

Laurent Kabila, the rebel leader, announced last week after capturing the country's second city, Lubumbashi, that he was relaxing his offensive for three days and waiting for Mr Mobutu to contact him. Rebel spokesmen indicated last weekend, however, that the pause in attacks had now ended, notwithstanding possible talks with Mr Mobutu. The president has repeatedly ignored calls to step down, including those from the United States, his former cold war ally.

The rebels have captured half the country in six months and have vowed to march on the capital, Kinshasa, to end Mr Mobutu's 32-year-old rule.

Rebel troops seized control of Lubumbashi's airport last week after a stand-off interrupted by skirmishes with about 300 members of Mr Mobutu's personal regiment, whose officers fled in the only planes. The other members of the presidential guard, the DSP, were either killed or fled into the bush.

For several hours the Alliance of Democratic Forces halted its attack on the airport while the DSP troops tried in vain to persuade their leaders in the capital, Kinshasa, to send a plane to rescue them.

The fall of the city — the country's greatest potential source of mining wealth — leaves the Alliance as the de facto government of most of the country. The rebels insist that Lubumbashi is no longer part of Zaire and has been incorporated into the rebels' revived Democratic Republic of Congo, which is creeping ever closer to Kinshasa.

Although there was no hint that Mr Mobutu was about to take up Mr Kabila's offer of a quiet retirement, rebel troops in Lubumbashi were evidently glad of the three-day break from fighting. Many looked exhausted after long marches.

Tshisekedi resists arrest after being sacked as Zaire's prime minister last week PHOTOGRAPH: JACK DABAGHIAN

Almost nowhere have the regime's forces stood their ground. The day before the fall of Lubumbashi, when rebels rolled into the nearby town of Likasi on a train, a local army commander was waiting on the platform to surrender. Not a shot was fired. The only real fight is being put up by Mr Mobutu himself in Kinshasa.

Mr Mobutu's political enemies had foolishly counted him out, but last week he proved that he could still throw the remnants of government into chaos. He imposed a state of emergency and appointed military governors in the regions still held by the regime. Then, on the day the president's old foe, Etienne Tshisekedi, was to have taken office as prime minister, Mr Mobutu crushed the new government.

He dispatched tanks to surround the prime minister's office and sent soldiers to give Mr Tshisekedi a beating. In his place, Mr Mobutu, perhaps attempting to prevent a coup or encourage the army to pretend it was still fighting, installed General Likulia Bolongo, an old ally. The move amounted to military rule.

Mr Tshisekedi excluded all but his most loyal followers from his Cabinet — besides offering the rebels six seats, which they derisively turned down. Mr Mobutu's party was up in arms. Others followed. The president moved swiftly, using his favoured divide-and-rule tactics to bury Mr Tshisekedi, who had alienated most of his potential political allies while earning the ire of the rebels for even accepting the prime minister's post while Mr Mobutu was still president.

But Mr Mobutu can only delay the inevitable. On Monday, his political opponents shut down Kinshasa with a stay-at-home call to back demands for him to quit.

Mr Kabila's sights are now set on the capital. He says that his forces are already within 320km of Kinshasa and will be ready to take it by June. There is no reason to believe he is wrong. The battle for Kinshasa, if it comes, will probably be very different from anything that the rebels have confronted before. Until now they have rolled into every city almost without hindrance. But the logistics of capturing the capital, with a population of 7 million, will prove challenging.

Mr Mobutu has an escape route — France has offered visas for 30 members of his family. Morocco is said to have offered 300 to other leading cronies. But many do not have such an attractive option. They include generals who may still be able to rally enough resistance to create a battle for the capital.

EU moves to isolate Iran over terrorism

Richard Norton-Taylor, and Denis Staunton in Berlin

RELATIONS between Iran and the West plunged to new depths last week as the European Union urged member states to recall their ambassadors from Tehran after a German court blamed the country's political leadership for the assassination of four Kurds in a Berlin restaurant.

In a swift response to the verdict, the EU also suspended its "critical dialogue" with Iran, which was promoted by Germany but bitterly opposed by the United States.

"It is proven that there was an official liquidation order," said the presiding judge, Frithjof Kubsch, referring to the murder of the Kurdish politicians at the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin on September 17, 1992. Two men — Kazem Darabi, a Berlin-based Iranian, and the Lebanese Abbas Rhayel — were found guilty of murdering Kurdish leader Sadiq Sarafkindi and three of his colleagues. They were sentenced to life terms. Two other Lebanese were found guilty of being accessories to murder and sentenced to 11 years and five years respectively.

Prosecutors said during the trial that the committee that ordered the murder included President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, and Iran's senior spiritual leader, Ali Khamenei.

● The Republican House speaker, Newt Gingrich, has called for the United States to carry out air strikes against Iran if intelligence officials conclude Tehran was behind last year's bombing of a US military compound in Saudi Arabia.

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 13

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Hint of life under Jupiter's icy moon

Tim Radford

PICTURES from one of the moons of Jupiter have once again raised the possibility of life beyond Earth.

The news came as Cambridge scientists announced that they had found two previously unknown galaxies.

The pictures, released last week, were taken on February 20, when the space probe, Galileo, flew within 580km of the moon Europa, to give for the first time fine-detail photographs of its surface.

They confirm that Europa has a crust of ice. What intrigues planetary scientists is that it is not pock-marked with craters. "Dead" planets and moons bear the scars of billions of years of battering with asteroids and comets, but dynamic planets like the Earth — with a hot core and a surface constantly changing because of weather, plant growth and volcanic action — do not bear many such scars.

Europa's surface, though shattered and fractured, looks very like ice that has melted and reformed — implying there is water under the ice. But Europa is an enormous distance from the Sun, so the only way there could be water is if its core is hot.

Lessons from the deep oceans on Earth suggest increasingly that the first requirements for life are a few organic chemicals, water and heat.

John Delaney, a planetary scientist at the University of Washington, told a Nasa press conference in California that he believed all the ingredients for life existed on Europa. "I am sure there's life there," he added.

Meanwhile Cambridge astronomers last week announced the discovery of Antlia — a galaxy so dim that it has been overlooked through the entire 300-year history of the telescope — and Argo, a dwarf galaxy lying just outside what astronomers know as the "local group".

Neither is very local: the light from the nearest has taken 3 million years to arrive.

The guess is that the knowable universe could contain 100 billion galaxies, each a home for 100 billion stars spread out over more than 10 billion light years of space. The Milky Way galaxy, of which the Sun is a modest star somewhere near the edge, is one in a little local cluster of galaxies. About 30 have been discovered altogether, three since 1990.

Nature has no place to hide nuclear waste

ED RODWELL (April 6) says "the adverse public health and environmental impacts of nuclear power are orders of magnitude less than those of the economically viable alternative fuels for generating electricity (coal, gas, oil) for the same quantity of electricity generated".

When, from 1972 to 1975, as federal minister for the environment in Australia, I lost the argument in Cabinet against uranium mining in the Northern Territory, I was chided by a fellow minister, Bill Hayden. He said the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation had the answer to nuclear waste, and that my concerns about the environment were "a middle-class wank".

Yet, 20 years later, according to New Scientist, Britain's multi-million-pound business in reprocessing spent nuclear fuel from abroad is facing an uncertain future, France's highest court has thrown a monkey wrench into plans to convert the world's largest fast-breeder reactor, Superphénix, into a research site and nuclear waste incinerator, and Japan's troubled nuclear power industry is facing a new crisis of confidence following a fire and an explosion at the Tokaimura waste-processing plant northeast of Tokyo.

Your editorial (The cost of a free nuclear lunch, March 16) highlights German public concern in Gorleben in Lower Saxony at "the temporary nature of the storage site: a nearby salt-mine is still being examined for permanent suitability".

The editorial adds that after 14 years, the US energy department admits it will "not be able to complete development of a suitable permanent site until 2010" for high-grade radioactive waste.

Rodwell wants to know "Which form of energy production has the least impact?" The answer, as far as nuclear power is concerned, is that it is absolutely unsafe, since nature cannot deal with the nuclear wastes produced in the process. On the other hand, nature can, in theory, deal with the wastes of fossil fuel combustion to generate electricity, for those end products are part of the natural cycle.

However, as the growing greenhouse problem confirms, nature cannot recycle those products at the rate we are now producing them, so they become pollution. In nature, green cells took 3 billion years or more to lower the level of carbon dioxide and raise the level of oxygen in the atmosphere to enable animal cells to survive and multiply. Using energy from the sun, those chlorophyll-bearing cells transformed the carbon dioxide gas into concentrated, structured resources.

"Burning" such an amount of those organic resources in 200 years as it took nature hundreds of millions of years to "create" of course "has an adverse impact", as Rodwell notes. Both forms of energy production, at present rates of consumption, have problems.

We must learn to live within the limits of nature's "interest", and stop destroying natural capital. I do not know how nuclear power fits into that equation, given that nature cannot manage nuclear waste in the forms we are producing it.

The best approach I have seen is that proposed by Karl-Henrik Robert and his scientist colleagues in Sweden, in an organisation called The Natural Step. TNS has now formalised nature's constraints as four System Conditions that are derived from non-negotiable scientific facts about how the planet functions.

I regret my inability to persuade enough of my parliamentary colleagues to contemplate the possibility of changing our economic and social approach to life — all life — on the planet. That paradigm shift is now more urgent than ever. As I see my grandchildren go off to school on sunny days, with wide-brimmed hats, and faces plastered with sun screen cream, and note the sunshades erected over areas of the school yard where they play, I realise they are living on an alien planet.

Moss Cass,
Melbourne, Australia

Japan played part in famine

I HOPE Dad Prithipaul (April 6) will provide chapter and verse for his claim that the Japanese offered rice to India in 1943. First I've heard of it in an academic career devoted largely to South Asia. Had the Japanese been at that time so humanitarian in their attitude toward the Indian people, they could have desisted from sinking the supply ships that were trying to bring food from Bombay to Calcutta and East Bengal.

I remember all too vividly the sight of starving peasants dying in the streets of Calcutta, and of women picking individual grains of rice from the roadway outside the Advanced Base Supply Depot in Chittagong, where I worked on the logistics of feeding 130,000 troops in the Arakan, fighting to keep the Japanese out of India.

It is true that India's famines were always man-made, in so far as shortages from whatever cause, drought generally, force up the price of staples beyond the purse of the poorest. The Bengal administration in 1943 lacked access to rice to put on the market in order to bring down the price being demanded by the Bengali merchants, and the poorest inevitably suffered.

It is easy with hindsight to suggest alternative scenarios. The situation in 1943 was grim indeed for India, as it was for all the allied forces ranged against the Axis powers in Europe, Asia and the Pacific.

Basil Johnson,
Canberra, Australia

Forgotten people of Bougainville

THE Le Monde editorial (Free voice of Timor goes unheard, April 6), which recognises "the forgotten freedom fighters of East Timor and Bougainville [as] emblematic of the struggle by Oceanian civilisations" defending their "extraordinary cultural diversity", shed a rare ray of light on the troubled Pacific island of Bougainville.

While media coverage focuses on political instability in Papua New Guinea caused by the PNG government's recent failed attempt to hire mercenaries to fight on Bougainville, little is mentioned about the dire conditions suffered by Bougainvillean civilians.

A third of families have been forcibly detained in dangerous government "care" [sic] centres. And the entire population suffers as the result of a crippling blockade by PNG military forces, aided by Australia. Islanders lack basic medical and food supplies, and an almost complete media blackout is maintained.

A call by the international community of journalists (and their readers) for free access for the press, as guaranteed by the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, must be the first step toward solving the crisis in Bougainville.

Roberta Casey,
Longueville, NSW, Australia

Jewish state of ambiguity

MARK LAZARUS'S criticism of the Guardian's use of "Jewish" rather than "Israeli" (April 6) betrays a naïvety about the religious nature of the Israeli state.

Non-Jewish Israelis do not enjoy the same rights and civil liberties as Jewish Israelis and it is more accurate to describe the building of a settlement in Arab east Jerusalem as a "new Jewish settlement", as it is only Jews who will be the frontiersmen and women of this Israeli expansion.

It is not that it is "difficult" to describe it as "a new Israeli settlement", for that is its purpose. If Jews around the world and in Israel want a lasting peace in Jerusalem and if the claim to be democratic is to be credible, then Israel must soon become a state also for those non-Jews who are its citizens.

P L Roberts,
Llantwit Major, Wales

THE READER who recently saw bias in the Guardian's usage of the words Israeli and Jew touched the root of the Middle East dispute, and the failure to understand it. Arab objection to the Har Homa settlement is precisely because it is Jewish, excluding Israeli Arabs. It is no consolation, but the victim of a terrorist or a madman in Israel is attacked not as a Jew but as an unfortunate symbol of a racist state.

Correct usage condones nobody's actions, but it avoids clouding the issue.

Richard Graham-Yooll,
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

A witness for the Wehrmacht

STEPHEN PLAICE asks "What did you do in the war, Vater?" (March 23).

This is my answer: I involuntarily wore a uniform for 10 years, PoW-camp included. I did not like Hitler, I hated his SS, I was convinced that the campaign in Russia would suffer the same fate as Napoleon's. Yet the army was the only body left where the Nazi organisations could not exert any pressure.

As an officer, I marched with the Sixth Army until we reached Stalingrad. That was no holiday trip, nor were we ordered or even willing to kill Jews, partisans or other civilians. Such cruelties would be perpetrated only by Hitler's SS or SD units.

The organisers of the recent Wehrmacht exhibition, who did not have to live through those terrible years, are telling me what really happened in the Sixth Army, what I should have seen or heard.

I studied the exhibition in Hamburg. It is certainly all truth, but it only tells half the story, unfortunately.

Joachim Willink,
Hamburg, Germany

Briefly

THE decision by senior judges that a woman cannot be legally forced to undergo a Caesarean (Foetus has 'no rights', April 6), if she is mentally competent and refuses the operation, is surely logical as well as just.

Many thousands of women harm their unborn babies through drug addiction, including smoking and drinking, but there is no legal obligation to stop. The mother, not the foetus, in those circumstances, is the one with rights, behaving well or badly as she chooses.

Jane Bolger,
Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

PERHAPS because the Guardian began in Manchester, one does expect your paper to be sensitive to regional differences and concerns. Personally, I have waited in vain for Martin Walker to discover that the United States is a large and extremely diverse country.

In the interest of accuracy in journalism, either change the headline of his column to read "Washington this week" or, preferably, ask that he actually does report on "The US this week". Such a shift in emphasis could provide your readers with important insights into the American mind, and might even lead to better international understanding.

Carol Campbell,
Truro, Nova Scotia, Canada

IN RESPONSE to Rob Pates (March 30), the reason for the US economic embargo on Cuba is simply the power of the lobby representing Cuban expatriates, mostly in Florida. These Cubans would gain greatly — many would say quite rightly — from the restoration of properties taken over and redistributed by President Castro.

Don Anson,
Worthington, Ohio, USA

I READ with consternation your post-Dolly debate (March 16). Clearly the next logical step is to clone conservative MPs, and then, perhaps, human beings.

Robert D Valerio,
Oaxaca, Mexico

HOW revealing that so many Tory MPs, including those untouched by any allegations, reserve their bitterest attacks not for the perpetrators of sleaze but for its exposers.

Keith Mack,
Hayes, Kent

NEIL HAMILTON should be thankful he's an MP and no ordinary man. Can you imagine a court deferring sentence because the defendant had a job interview looming?

Gail Seery,
Beckenham, Kent

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India's ruling coalition collapses

Suzanne Goldenberg

INDIA faces the prospect of months of political uncertainty or an unwelcome election brought on by the collapse of the ruling coalition under prime minister H D Deve Gowda.

Mr Gowda's government lost a confidence motion last week, a final act to days of feverish behind-the-scenes negotiations to save the 10-month-old coalition. In a last indignity, MPs demanded a manual recount of the 292 to 158 vote.

The president, Shankar Dayal Sharma, accepted Mr Gowda's resignation and asked him to continue until arrangements were made to replace the centre-left United Front government.

To avoid a snap election the United Front says it is willing to consider dropping Mr Gowda, while Congress says it would back any replacement United Front candidate for the prime minister's job.

There is a fierce battle of wills between Mr Gowda and the Congress party leader, Sitaram Kesri. A congress spokes man said on Monday: "The United Front should choose a new leader . . . If they change the leader we will support them and not stake their own claim."

Although Mr Gowda said he had no regrets, there were passionate pleas in parliament to allow the ruling alliance to survive. Political leaders were prepared to hold talks to avoid fresh elections. "If there are problems, we must discuss them," the finance minister, P Chidambaram, said. "There is a method to sit down and say: "Let us resolve our differences'."

But despite the desperation of the United Front amalgam of regional and leftwing parties and the Congress to avoid facing an electorate which, less than a year after the last vote, is unlikely to be kindly disposed towards either, nobody was willing to compromise.

Mr Gowda turned down appeals from regional parties in his 13-member alliance to resign, and last-minute talks between the two sides broke down later.

Nevertheless, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader in the house, Somnath Chatterjee, persisted. "The time has not been lost. I am appealing to the Congress: please sit across the table and decide as mature people what is to be done. For the sake of the people and this country, let us show some statesmanship."

India's former prime minister H D Deve Gowda (centre) after losing the vote of confidence PHOTO: AJIT KUMAR

However, the Congress party was adamant. "All these months they did not tell this to us. They are using the Congress as a door mat," his Congress counterpart, Santosh Mohan Dev, replied.

India's crisis erupted at the end of March, when Mr Kesri announced Congress was withdrawing its support for the coalition — it is not a part of the government — accusing Mr Gowda's government of drift. He said the country had been plunged into lawlessness and that tensions between Hindus and Muslims were rising.

Most observers believe Mr Kesri's attack owes much to his anger at the pursuit of corrupt Congress politicians. Indian newspapers have speculated that Mr Kesri's timing may also be linked to investigations into the murder of his physician and close friend.

But Mr Kesri's hopes of becoming India's next prime minister were confounded by Mr Gowda's refusal to stand down and by the loyalty demonstrated by his disparate coalition. Despite Mr Kesri's bravado, he was unable to win over enough MPs from other parties to give his Congress a majority of seats in parliament.

Mr Gowda's alliance resulted from a shared desire to block the Bharatiya Janata rightwing Hindu party.

Soldiers sail into Albania

Julian Borger in Durres

TROOPSHIPS began arriving off the Albanian coast on Tuesday, bringing the main contingent of an Italian-led force aimed at restoring public order and helping to deliver humanitarian aid.

But the soldiers seem confused about how they will carry out the task, and are deeply suspicious of their host, President Sali Berisha, officials say.

Officers already in Albania as part of the advance guard believe the biggest threat to their safety will come from gangs loyal to the president that may engineer clashes to try to put off the June elections, which Mr Berisha is expected to lose.

While politicians have promised great things from the 6,000-strong multinational force, little groundwork has been laid for its arrival.

The troops (from Italy, France, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Romania, Denmark and Austria) have vague orders to set up a "calming presence" and to avoid direct involvement in aid delivery. "It is not for us a humanitarian mission. We cannot be an [aid organisation], but our presence can deter aggressive actions against [them]," said Major Hervé Gourmelon, of the French contingent, in Durres.

There has been no co-ordination between the force commanders and the humanitarian organisations whose shipments they are meant to protect. According to aid officials, the arrival of the first bulk consignment, 420 tonnes of grain and beans, has been delayed by more than 10 days, mainly because the main port at Durres will be clogged with troop carriers.

The World Food Programme (WFP), which organised the shipment, said it had intended to distribute the food without military support as relative calm has returned to Albania in the past month after riots caused by the collapse in January of fraudulent savings schemes.

The WFP's regional director, Jean-Marie Boucher, said the Italian-led troops would be a welcome safety net: "If they can provide assistance when we need it, then we hope to co-ordinate with them." He added that there had so far been no talks with any members of the force.

There were signs this week that the soldiers and the aid workers might finally make contact. Officers at the French base camp near Durres were asking journalists for the WFP's address in the capital, Tirana.

It is still unclear whether the multinational operation, codenamed "Alba", will try to disarm the population, many of whom seized weapons from government stores during the chaos. The Danes and Austrians are said to be keen to try, while the Italians and French have ruled it out as being too dangerous.

Italian troops have been issued with a phrase-book telling them how to shout "Stop!" and "Drop the gun!" in Albanian.

Israelis shoot 31 Palestinians

Shyam Bhatia in Hebron

ISRAELI troops shot and injured 31 Palestinians in clashes in the West Bank last week, and Israel again accused Yasser Arafat of not doing enough to curb terrorism. The violence erupted in Hebron after the funeral of Nader Isseid, aged 24, one of two Palestinians shot dead by rubber-coated steel bullets fired by Israeli soldiers on Tuesday last week.

Several Arab youths used slingshots to try to hit Israeli snipers. Protesters hooted as if they were at a football match when a stone found its mark.

An alleged Israeli collaborator, Yousef Saleh Salim, aged 47, was shot twice in the head by unknown gunmen near his home town of Azun in the West Bank. Palestinian sources said he had been a member of the discredited Village Leagues established by Israel in the early 1980s as an alternative to the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Among those injured in Hebron were two Palestinian policemen, bringing to eight the number of Palestinian security force members who were wounded in a 48-hour period.

Some of the policemen — who belong to the rapid deployment force headed by Colonel Jibril Rajoub — were also injured by stones thrown by demonstrators as police formed a human chain to prevent Palestinians from storming Hebron's Jewish enclave.

The round rubber-coated steel bullets that have caused most of the Hebron injuries are about 3cm in diameter. They are being preserved by doctors at Aliya hospital as "evidence" of Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people. "These are not standard rubber bullets as you understand them in the West," said Dr Yousef Sharawi. "If shot from close range, these can kill."

Israeli police released two Jewish settlers who shot dead a Palestinian in Hebron last week. The settlers claimed they acted in self-defence after Palestinian rioters stoned them and sprayed them with tear gas. The two were released on $6,500 bail each, on condition they stay away from Hebron.

Israel television reported that Israeli security officials, accompanied by representatives of the CIA, had met Mr Arafat in Gaza last week. The meeting was attended by commanders of the Palestinian police and security forces. This was the first meeting of its kind since contacts between the Israelis and Palestinians were broken off after the Israeli government's decision to start building the Har Homa settlement in east Jerusalem.

Apartheid spy rumours unsettle ANC

David Beresford in Johannesburg

A DEGREE of frenzy is developing in the African National Congress over allegations that the South African cabinet is riddled with apartheid-era spies.

Last week the ANC announced it was expelling the head of the party in the Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal, Sifiso Nkabinde, because it had evidence that he had been in the pay of the security forces from 1992.

The allegations triggered a new round of speculation about other apartheid agents in the ANC leadership. Local newspapers reported that several lists of spies were circulating, naming up to five cabinet ministers. The author of one list, a former state assassin, Joe Mamasela, claims that last week he escaped an ambush by gunmen trying to stop him naming the ministers.

Last weekend, the deputy minister of tourism and the environment, Peter Mokaba, appealed to the ANC leadership to clear him of allegations of spying, which he said had been trumped up by his rivals within the movement. There are also suspicions of a smear campaign against some ministers by disaffected members of the military, the police and intelligence services.

The ANC has long been paranoid where spies are concerned. Internal witch-hunts during the years of exile led to atrocities that blemished its human rights record. There is evidence that the South African security forces fed this paranoia to undermine the liberation struggle.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu's truth commission has been drawn into the controversy, agreeing — after appeals from Nelson's Mandela's likely successor, Thabo Mbeki — to demand that security personnel seeking amnesty for human rights abuses during apartheid disclose informers names.

Former president F W de Klerk's National Party has not gone untouched by the hysteria. Newspapers recently identified one of its negotiators in the multi-party talks that led to the political settlement with the ANC as an agent working for the liberation movement.

The politician, alleged to have been blackmailed after being caught in a "honey-trap" involving sexual favours, denied the claim but failed to take any action.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates April 14	Sterling rates April 7
Australia	2.0811-2.0836	2.0979-2.1005
Austria	19.66-19.69	19.61-19.63
Belgium	57.58-57.63	57.47-57.54
Canada	2.2875-2.2896	2.2631-2.2653
Denmark	10.64-10.65	10.61-10.62
France	9.40-9.40	9.37-9.38
Germany	2.7951-2.7976	2.7866-2.7899
Hong Kong	12.57-12.58	12.62-12.63
Ireland	1.0503-1.0523	1.0484-1.0504
Italy	2,747-2,750	2,741-2,744
Japan	204.90-205.11	204.80-205.07
Netherlands	3.1420-3.1449	3.1344-3.1372
New Zealand	2.3432-2.3462	2.3805-2.3836
Norway	11.29-11.30	11.34-11.35
Portugal	279.22-279.51	279.66-280.00
Spain	235.20-235.41	235.32-235.51
Sweden	12.37-12.38	12.56-12.58
Switzerland	2.3614-2.3643	2.3909-2.3939
USA	1.6222-1.6231	1.6292-1.6302
ECU	1.4296-1.4309	1.4240-1.4257

FTSE 100 Share Index down 20.0 at 4251.7. FTSE 250 Index down 12.9 at 4605.8. Gold down $1.00 at $345.75.

Hong Kong gets new chains

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong

THE incoming Hong Kong government, under orders from Beijing to undo the reforms introduced by Governor Chris Patten, unveiled a blueprint last week for curbing civil liberties after Britain's last colonial governor sails out of Victoria Harbour on June 30.

The proposals, long expected but certain to spark another round of Sino-British bickering, call for recently abolished restrictions on assembly and association to be revived and aim to restore the more authoritarian legal apparatus erected in the heyday of colonial rule.

"They talk all the time about shaking off the shackles of colonialism but at the same time they want to take us back to the dark old days," said Emily Lau, an independent legislator and critic of both British and Chinese policy. "Are they saying that we are in fact to become just another colony?"

The changes were outlined in a "consultation document" issued by the office of Mr Patten's Beijing-appointed successor, Tung Chee-hwa. The public was given three weeks to respond, but its views are unlikely to have much impact.

China's National People's Congress (NPC), a meek legislature responsible for endorsing Communist party diktat, ruled in February that a catalogue of Hong Kong legislation must be amended as soon as Britain pulls out at midnight on June 30. Many of the laws are technical but others deal with fundamental rights. China says they all contravene the basic law, a constitution drafted for Hong Kong after the handover.

Mr Patten urged his successor to reconsider and said his government would issue a document to rebut arguments for rolling back civil liberties. "The NPC is no Moses bringing the tablets down from the top of the mountain," he said.

"But now we have got these proposals put forward without any justification, proposals everybody knows to some extent turn the clock back on the freedoms Hong Kong enjoys."

The document contains no surprises, merely spelling out what form the legal changes will take. These include tight restrictions on foreign involvement in Hong Kong politics and the resurrection of colonial-era police powers to ban demonstrations.

The exercise is full of irony. The proposals were announced by Michael Suen, a senior civil servant who, having worked with Mr Patten to liberalise Hong Kong law, now serves Mr Tung, mapping out ways to undo the reforms. Moreover, the colonial laws the Communist party is so keen to revive were introduced to suppress it.

The proposed ban on foreign meddling in Hong Kong politics appears to leave Hong Kong's tycoons free to meddle in foreign politics. Many of its richest plutocrats, including Mr Tung, have made large donations to the British Conservative party. These same tycoons are now among China's loudest cheerleaders and the strongest critics of Mr Patten, a former Conservative party chairman.

Mr Suen cited the need to find "a balance between civil liberties and social stability, personal rights and social obligations, individual interests and the common good".

Mr Patten mocked the argument. "When you go around Hong Kong, do you get the impression that this is a community on the brink of social breakdown? If they seek to choke off political activity, it will produce the sort of social and political problems they say they want to avoid."

Ms Lau said: "I don't see any reason to make such proposals. The real reason is purely political. They want to give the future government the power to control us if it wants."

● The leader of Hong Kong's largest political party a London-trained barrister deemed a subversive by China, will meet President Bill Clinton and senior United States policymakers this week amid a furore about plans to curtail civil liberties under Chinese rule.

The White House tête-à-tête with Martin Lee will infuriate China, which considers Hong Kong a domestic issue in which foreigners will have no say after the July 1 handover. Mr Clinton was initially reluctant to offend Beijing, but bowed to political pressure to grant the Democratic party leader an audience.

Mr Lee's reception in Washington will also annoy Hong Kong's leader-in-waiting, Mr Tung.

Comment, page 12

The Week

THE State Department in Washington is to release documents on wartime and post-war negotiations with allies, the Swiss and other neutral countries that claim Britain and France frustrated US attempts to recover gold and valuables seized by the Nazis.

THE retrial of the former SS captain Erich Priebke, accused of taking part in Italy's worst atrocity of the second world war, has begun in Rome.

THE CIA admitted it knew the location of Iraq's nerve gas and chemical weapons dumps and has apologised for failing to alert Gulf war commanders.
Washington Post, page 13

THE European Union backed away from looming confrontation with the US over Cuba, offering to suspend its legal action against the controversial US Helms-Burton Act.
Washington Post, page 13

CESARE ROMITI, chairman of Fiat, was jailed for 18 months in Milan for falsifying the car maker's books. Paolo Matteoli, the finance director, was sent to prison for 16 months on the same charges.

A GOVERNMENT of national reconciliation in Angola was sworn in at a ceremony attended by 13 foreign heads of state but boycotted by the Unita leader, Jonas Savimbi.

AN Iraqi plane flying Muslims on the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca in defiance of the United Nations air embargo on Baghdad landed in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The US is pressing the UN to condemn Iraq.

A CATALOGUE of police and judicial incompetence has been handed to the Belgian parliament after a six-month investigation into the country's paedophile scandal.

A BELGIAN paratrooper was arrested following allegations that troops serving with the UN Restore Hope mission in Somalia four years ago tortured and perhaps murdered children and civilians.

BRITAIN'S dependency of St Helena was in revolt after a crowd set fire to the island's only police van, the governor, David Smallman, departed on "mid-term leave" after being accused of dictatorial tendencies, and the former colony's governing executive council of islanders split.

HELENE HANFF, author of 84 Charing Cross Road, has died in New York at the age of 80.

LAURA NYRO, 1960s singer and pianist, has died of cancer at the age of 49.

Attempt to assassinate Pope foiled

AN ATTEMPT to assassinate Pope John Paul II was thwarted hours before his arrival in the Bosnian capital last weekend for a historic "healing mission", *writes Karen Coleman in Sarajevo.*

A passer-by alerted police to 23 anti-tank mines strapped beneath a bridge the pontiff was due to cross. A United Nations spokesman said the bombs were discovered hours before the Pope's arrival, and were connected to a detonator and a remote-control device.

UN officials and local police said a worker spotted a person acting suspiciously near the bridge on the road from Sarajevo airport last Saturday morning and told police. Television pictures showed police taking large green circular mines from beneath the bridge. It is not known who was responsible.

Reconciliation and forgiveness were the key messages the Pope delivered to the Bosnians during his two-day visit. "Sarajevo has become the symbol of the suffering of the whole of Europe," he said while celebrating mass last Sunday at the city's main football stadium.

"The hope of all people of goodwill is that what Sarajevo symbolises will remain confined to the 20th century and that its tragedies will not be repeated in the millennium about to begin. Let us forgive and let us ask for forgiveness."

Snow did not deter the freezing pilgrims. "I'm happy he's here," said Katica Santic, who had travelled by bus from Vitez, central Bosnia.

Muslim leaders also had warm words. Ejup Ganic, the Bosnian vice-president, said the papal calls for reconciliation were achievable.

● The UN said voting by rebel Serbs in Croatia's elections last Sunday was extended into Monday after technical problems delayed the opening of polling stations in Eastern Slavonia.

The Pope takes shelter during a snowstorm in Sarajevo last weekend PHOTOGRAPH: JANEK SKARZYNSKI

Grenade attacks injure 75 in Ethiopia

Alice Martin in Addis Ababa

A HAND grenade exploded in a supermarket in Addis Ababa on Monday wounding 33 people — six seriously — police said. This brings to 75 the number of people wounded by grenade attacks in the capital in a 48-hour period. One woman was killed last weekend.

An official statement said the grenade was lobbed into the Tana supermarket in Merkato, the capital's main market.

Police advised the public to avoid "terrorist" attacks and said they were seeking the attackers.

In an incident that took place last weekend, an Ethiopian waitress was killed and 42 people, including four Britons and a French couple, were wounded in grenade attacks on a restaurant and a hotel in the centre of the capital.

Two members of a British government-funded police training team were seriously injured when they threw themselves on to an exploding grenade to protect their wives and other diners at a crowded restaurant.

They were among 41 people wounded in two separate explosions that took place almost simultaneously in different districts of Addis Ababa.

Blair Davies and John Bown are part of a British team training the Ethiopian police force, in a project funded by the Overseas Development Administration (ODA).

Speaking from hospital in Addis Ababa, the men said they had just sat down at the Blue Tops Italian restaurant when they saw what resembled an explosive device being lobbed near their table.

"We instinctively threw ourselves on the explosive to protect our wives from serious injuries," Mr Bown said. Mr Davies added: "Our injuries are painful but not life-threatening."

The manager of Blue Tops, Luigi Ferrari, said three men entered at about 7.40pm and, after a brief conversation with a waitress, lobbed two grenades at the diners inside. "Two Jamaicans were untouched but two British couples and a French couple were injured," he said.

The device, which the British embassy in Addis Ababa described as a simple grenade, landed between the British and French couples — all resident in Ethiopia.

The French woman sustained severe facial injuries. The British men's wives were treated for shock and minor injuries.

Sudan rebel gains benefit Uganda

Anna Borzello in Yei

ONE month after an ambush on the road to Yei, the air still stinks of rotting flesh. Around the burnt-out jeeps and lorries lining the narrow route lie scores of dead soldiers.

Beyond the scattered Korans and medicines on the roadside are the belongings of the 10,000 civilians who made up the tail end of the ill-fated Sudan army convoy — torn clothes, warped records and school books trodden into the mud.

The fall of Yei, and the ambush south of the town, was a significant victory for the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which has been fighting since 1983 against attempts by Khartoum to Islamicise the mainly Christian and animist south.

In launching its southern offensive from Kaya on March 9, it opened another front against the government — already fighting an alliance of SPLA and northern opposition leaders in the north and east.

The SPLA successes, however, have been significant not only for Sudan. More than half of the 3,000 men killed and captured in the Yei ambush were Ugandan West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) rebels.

Uganda has long accused Sudan of providing arms and sanctuary to three northern Ugandan rebel groups: the WNBF; the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA); and the little-known Uganda National Rescue Front II (UNRF2).

These groups have undermined Yoweri Museveni's claim to be the first post-independence president to bring peace to Uganda. Rebel activity has brought development in northern Uganda to a standstill, prompting the UN department of humanitarian affairs to declare it a "humanitarian crisis".

The WNBF, led by Juma Oris, a former foreign minister under deposed president Idi Amin, claims it has been fighting in the West Nile region since 1995 for multi-party democracy. The reality is more mundane — many WNBF members, originally recruited into the Ugandan army by Amin, are bitter they were not granted pensions when he was overthrown.

Although the WNBF is not the most notorious of Uganda's rebel groups, it has succeeded in making much of West Nile a no-go area. The Ugandan army tried to dislodge the 4,000-strong force, but claimed it was unsuccessful because the rebels sought sanctuary in Zaire and Sudan.

But all this has now changed with Sudanese and Zairean rebel victories along Uganda's borders. The WNBF's Zairean bases were wiped out in February, when Zairean rebels and Ugandan troops overran towns used by the WNBF. The SPLA has been even more effective, destroying the WNBF bases in Sudan and overrunning UNRF2 camps.

Given the benefits for Uganda in having Sudanese and Zairean rebels on its borders, it is not surprising that both states accuse Uganda of backing the rebels.

Despite evidence to the contrary, Uganda denies the claim, arguing that the routing of the Ugandan rebels is simply fortuitous. But while Uganda's defence minister, Amama Mbabazi, is confident the WNBF is finished, it is too early for the government to celebrate — in 1995, President Museveni proclaimed that the LRA had been wiped out after the SPLA overran its camps, but it resurfaced three months later.

World trade slumps as Tigers flag

Richard Thomas

THE Asian economic "miracle", spearheaded by the Tiger economies of the Pacific Rim, has stalled and sent world trade growth into a slump, according to figures released last week by the World Trade Organisation.

After a decade of spectacular growth, the countries of Southeast Asia have been hit by a slowing world economy and a strong dollar, putting the region at the bottom of the global export table.

Unveiling its latest health check on trading, the organisation said exports from Asia — which have fuelled a 1990s boom in the volume of world trade — lagged behind the pace of economic growth during 1996. As a result, global exports rose by just 4 per cent last year, less than half the rate in 1995.

Gerard Lyons, chief economist at the Japanese bank DKB International, said Asia's shoes had been partially filled by new high-growth regions.

"There has been a general assumption that Asia will do well — everyone wants to invest their pension there," he said. "But you can't keep growing that fast for ever. In fact, Latin America is the new growth pole."

Mr Lyons said the rapid growth recorded by Asian economies since the mid-1980s represented a period of catch-up with the West, a process now largely complete.

WTO economists said many Asian nations had based their growth on the export of computers and telecommunications equipment — markets that have been in sharp decline in the past two years.

Mr Lyons said: "It is not quite the end of the miracle. But it is a reminder that Asia is not a homogeneous block, and that the economies are maturing."

The WTO also said political tensions may have damaged trade within the Asian region, pointing out that exports between China and Hong Kong had contracted sharply during 1996.

While North America, western Europe and Latin America saw their exports growing faster than their economies, the WTO singled out such former stars of the region as China, Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia, which saw the pace of export growth slip well below the rate of economic expansion.

Struck dumb by the 'race curse'



The US this week

Martin Walker

THERE WAS a sad, historical irony in the decision last week by a judge in Tennessee to allow new ballistic tests on the rifle that supposedly killed Martin Luther King 29 years ago this month. It will no doubt be comforting for his family and interesting to history to assess the evidence as to whether James Earl Ray was innocent of the assassination, as he claims.

But the sad part of the great legacy of King, an outstanding apostle of non-violence and the leader of one of the most successful movements of social reform in American history, is the speed with which it is being dismantled. He believed in an America where his children would be judged "not by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character".

For King, that meant not only establishing the legal equality of black Americans as voters and as citizens, but giving that legal status meaning by investing in the education, housing and career opportunities that would also bring social and economic equality. It is almost 34 years since he delivered his best-known speech — "I have a dream" — and while it still reads magnificently, much of its sentiment rings hollow today.

President Clinton, who called race relations "America's constant curse" in his inaugural address, plans to do something about them. So far, beyond showing up for this week's 50th anniversary of Jackie Robinson being the first black to play in baseball's major leagues, he has little idea what to do. He has instructed his political staff to come up with something to help redeem the two monstrous defeats that US blacks, and the traditional liberal model of racial desegregation and racial equality, have suffered in the past week.

The first blow arrived with an academic report that should have broken like a thunderclap. The report, from Harvard's graduate school of education, found that US public schools are now more segregated than at any time since the 1950s, when the de facto system of educational apartheid provoked the Supreme Court to issue its landmark decision that set in train the civil rights movement.

More than two-thirds of black children, and three-quarters of Hispanics, are now in schools where minorities make up a majority of the student body. The drift of middle-class whites to private and religious schools is a minor factor. The main reason for the change is that the more conservative Supreme Court installed by Presidents Reagan and Bush have whittled away at the 1954 decision in Brown v Board of Education, that racially segregated schools were against the Constitution.

In a series of decisions, the new court has said that metropolitan school boards should not be required to bus children back and forth across cities to install a racial balance in schools that does not exist in the residence patterns. The result, the Harvard study said, was that: "In American race relations, the bridge from the 20th century may be leading back to the 19th."

The second blow to the old liberal tradition came from the US Appeals Court, where two judges appointed by President Reagan and one by President Bush declared that California's Proposition 209, endorsed by 54 per cent of the state's voters last November, was constitutional. The proposition forbids the state government from considering race or sex in hiring staff, awarding state contracts or admitting students to state colleges.

This dismantles the old system of affirmative action — the attempt to increase the chances of blacks and other minorities securing jobs and higher education, thereby making the legal equality established by the civil rights movement a reality. It was a process that began, in government, with the administration of President Nixon, not usually known for his liberal instincts.

But then Nixon, and the America that elected him in 1968, had been through the wrenching experience of a wretched and unpopular war abroad and something that began to smack of a civil war at home. The black riots that burned the hearts out of Watts in Los Angeles, Detroit and then Washington, and dozens of other cities in the years following the supposed triumphs of civil rights, demanded a government response. Affirmative action for those who would respond to opportunity, and a welfare culture for those who would not, has been for almost 30 years the official remedy.

The new Republican welfare bill that Clinton signed into law last August, and the success of Proposition 209, thus represent a counter-revolution in race relations. No wonder the president feels he must do something. But what? His remedy for the unpopularity among whites of affirmative action has been a soundbite: mend it, don't end it. Now he must do more. The White House will continue to fight Proposition 209 in the courts, probably going all the way to the Supreme Court, which will buy time. The White House is also proposing to expand college scholarships and grants, but these, too, could fall foul of the demand for "an opportunity society that is colour blind".

The phrase comes from Ward Connerly, a successful black businessman and University of California regent who led the fight for Proposition 209, on the principle that racial preferences are wrong and in the long run do no favours to black people. Connerly might be said to embody the social revolution that has transformed the lives of many blacks in the three decades since civil rights.

There is now, thanks in part to affirmative action and the federal government's equal opportunity programmes, a sizeable and growing black middle class. One American black in three now lives in a household with an income above $45,000 a year (the US average is $39,000 a year). In this sense, "America's constant curse" is becoming a class problem, rather than a racial one.

But where race and class coincide, as they do in the way that one young black male in three is either in jail, on probation or awaiting trial, Clinton's America has no visible remedy except to build more prisons. The country now spends more on building jails than it does on building colleges.

Frustration with the Democrats combines with the new middle class to explain the growing phenomenon of black Republicans and conservatives, such as Connerly, Oklahoma Congressman J C Watts, academics such as Thomas Sowell and radio talk-show hosts such as Armstrong Williams. The Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan shares some of their sentiments.

THEY condemn the Democrats for taking the black vote (84 per cent of which went to Clinton last November) for granted. And they look to solutions such as tax-free enterprise zones in the inner city, localised welfare and drug rehabilitation programmes run by churches, and school vouchers. These are ideas promoted by Republicans rather than by Democrats, who still defend the traditional bureaucratic remedies.

Since Clinton and his staff have so few ideas of their own, my guess is that they will start to adopt these conservative proposals. Indeed, the process has already begun. The Republican Congressman Watts last month introduced legislation, drafted with conservative bodies such as the Christian Coalition and Family Research Council and Americans for Tax Reform, for a Community Renewal Act. The idea is to replace bureaucracies and state subsidies with supercharged enterprise zones, institute local tax cuts, scrap regulations that hamper small businesses, and turn public housing into rent-to-buy clubs, with local churches and charities acting as catalysts and organisers.

The surprise is that black liberals in Congress, such as Don Payne of New Jersey, a former chairman of the Black Caucus, and New York Congressman Floyd Flake, are co-sponsors of the legislation. For Flake, a pastor whose own New York church runs old-age homes and a school "this is doing what we've been doing in Queens for ourselves".

There may be no other policy route for Clinton's "racial healing initiative" to take. Unless, that is, he takes his courage in his hands and declares that though the old liberal remedies may have been unpopular, they fended off hardship and riots in the inner cities and built the black middle class. He might also point to the irony in the way they are fleeing to the safer streets and better schools of the suburbs, just like middle-class whites did before them, leaving the inner cities to their own hapless devices.

Martin Luther King's children could have had stellar political careers for the asking. They have instead chosen to become custodians of the shrine to him in Atlanta, and of the myth that surrounds him. Modern America being the place it is, this means they have become a commercial corporation, much concerned with copyright and the value of the brand name. They have signed a deal with Time-Warner for a series of books, tapes and CD-Roms, designed to bring in $10 million a year.

There appears also to be a commercial aspect to the decision by the King family to support the appeal of their father's convicted killer. They have signed a contract to co-operate with Oliver Stone, the Hollywood film-maker, who is planning an MLK movie to complete his 1960s cinematic saga of JFK and Nixon.

James Earl Ray's British-based lawyer is offering new state-of-the-art ballistic evidence to claim that the bullet that killed King was not fired from the hunting rifle that carried Ray's fingerprints. King was shot as he stood on the balcony of the Lorraine motel in Memphis on April 4, 1968. Ray was arrested at London's Heathrow airport three months later, and the ability of this unsuccessful and on-the-run bank robber from Missouri in obtaining false travel documents has inspired a range of conspiracy theories.

The bullet that killed King has been a matter of controversy since 1993, when a Memphis homicide detective, Barry Linville, who attended King's autopsy, said for the first time that the "murder bullet" that came back from the FBI labs squashed and flattened, and in three separate pieces, was not the "virtually intact" bullet that he saw removed from King's body.

The autopsy found that the bullet hit King in his right cheekbone and shattered his jaw, spun out of his skull and re-entered above the collarbone, where it went on to break his neck and finally came to rest beside his shoulderblade. A large second entrance wound in his neck indicated that the bullet had already mushroomed from first hitting the jaw, and was tumbling.

"It was mushroomed — we could see that on the X-ray. There was a whole trail of bullet fragments [through the body]. It was not a pristine bullet," said Dr Michael Braden, a forensic pathologist who reviewed King's autopsy in 1978 for the Congressional committee that investigated the assassination. He found that Ray had "probably" been the killer, but had not acted alone.

Ray's lawyer, William Pepper, claimed in court to be able to identify the shadowy "Raoul", who Ray has long claimed set him up as the scapegoat for the killing. This is part of Pepper's own complex theory of Mafia and political conspiracy to silence King, just as his support of the anti-Vietnam war campaign was becoming a serious problem for President Johnson's administration.

All of this seems tailor-made for Oliver Stone, whose films about Kennedy and Nixon offered Byzantine conspiracy theories. But since he confessed to the killing and thus avoided a trial, Ray's role in the assassination has never been tested in a court of law. Perhaps justice can now finally be done. But as Clinton flails for some useful policies to help that large majority of black Americans who have not clambered into the middle class, it is poignant that the man remembered for "I have a dream" may soon become best known to his countrymen through Stone's febrile imagination.



Clearer picture? . . . James Earl Ray's lawyer says he possesses evidence that proves his client innocent of Martin Luther King's assassination PHOTOGRAPH: CRAIG BLACKENHORN

US strawberry fields turn sour

Christopher Reed in Los Angeles

MORE than 10,000 strawberry pickers gathered last weekend in Watsonville, 140km south of San Francisco, to launch a trade union campaign to improve conditions harvesting what they call *la fruta del diablo*, the devil's fruit.

Among the most exploited and impoverished workers in the United States, they are confronting a $650 million agro-industry. But marching under their flag — a black eagle on strawberry red — they chanted "*Sí se puede*" ("Yes, it can be done").

The strawberry pickers are seeking to change decades of mistreatment in Californian agriculture, which has a history rich in drama and tragedy. It was depicted in the 1940 film The Grapes of Wrath, starring Henry Fonda, and chronicled in the legendary career of César Chavez and his United Farm Workers union in the 1960s. It includes dozens of murders, hundreds of beatings and untold misery stretching back 100 years.

Now, with the backing of the AFL-CIO, America's trade union congress, the campaign is recruiting thousands of strawberry pickers, mostly of Mexican origin. The workers earn about $6 an hour for 12-hour days in a March to October season.

Yet the industry is immensely profitable. It has doubled in 10 years, while scientists produce ever larger and more luscious fruit. This is exported worldwide, and some of the choicest strawberries will turn up at this year's Wimbledon tennis championships in London.

Pickers complain that they are frequently denied field lavatories or drinking water. Foremen sometimes demand sex from women who need work, and children labour illegally. Workers must often pay for equipment and rarely receive medical insurance. Housing is poor and job security non-existent.

In one recent case, workers were found living in caves, and shanty towns made from cardboard are springing up in the countryside as the workforce — more than a third of it made up of illegal immigrants — swells.

The UFW had declined from its glory days of the 1960s, when Chavez became a famous figure after being photographed praying in a field with the late Robert Kennedy. By the time of the union leader's death in 1994, membership had fallen from 80,000 to fewer than 20,000. Wages had actually declined, and his boycott policy had proved a failure.

Today, his son-in-law, Arturo Rodriguez, a university graduate, has taken the UFW back to its roots, boosting membership to about 26,000. Now fully backed by the union movement in the US, the UFW hopes to force growers and processors to improve conditions and pay.

Growers say the UFW exaggerates the privations. When the union recently won three fights to form local branches, the growers ploughed under the crops or shut down.

This strategy persuaded Mr Rodriguez to confront the industry as a whole. But the Hispanic farm workers lack political influence, or even the vote.

The present campaign will measure the success of the US trade union movement's resurgence — and perhaps even prick the conscience of the affluent consumer.

UN calls for end to sexual mutilation

THE heads of three United Nations agencies last week called for international backing for a campaign to end the practice of female genital mutilation, widespread in Africa and parts of the Middle East.

Launching the appeal at a news conference, the World Health Organisation (WHO) director-general, Hiroshi Nakajima, said 130 million women and girls around the globe had been subjected to such mutilation and 2 million more were added each year.

"This practice is an infringement on the physical and psycho-integrity of women and is a form of violence against them," Mr Nakajima declared.

The operation, sometimes called female circumcision, is common in Africa and usually involves very painful partial or total removal of external female genital organs, or their mutilation.

It is carried out, sociologists say, largely to encourage the woman — whose enjoyment of sexual relations is seriously impaired — to remain a virgin until marriage and so be more attractive to a potential husband.

Medical experts say it very often leads to death through infection, or life-long health problems, as well as infertility and complications in giving birth.

Nafis Sadik, executive director of the United Nations Population Fund, said many women and girls accepted the practice because they feared remaining unmarried.

"Women themselves appear to be a large part of the problem. We have to fight against the very people we are trying to protect," she said.

According to the WHO, the operation is performed on women of all ages, but in general it is done on those aged between four and 12. It is usually performed by traditional practitioners using crude instruments, ranging from knives and razors to broken glass, usually without anaesthetics, says the WHO.

There has being growing concern in several western European countries — and especially France — at the spread of female circumcision in immigrant communities. — *Reuter*

National Trust to ban deer hunting

Paul Brown

THE National Trust's ruling council last week decided to ban deer hunting on its land from the end of this season on April 30, after a scientific report said the practice was "unnatural and cruel".

The five deer hunts involved may defy the ruling, because although this decision impedes their range, the trust does not control all the ground they use.

After recovering from the shock of the report, which changed the minds of the National Trust's 52-strong council, the British Field Sports Society said it would have the science verified before it accepted the report.

The trust's council has sent the report, by Patrick Bateson of Cambridge University, to the Government and asked that a similar report into whether fox hunting is cruel should be commissioned to inform Parliament of the facts.

The trust's chairman, Charles Nunneley, said: "There used to be two camps: those who said deer enjoyed or were at least equipped for the chase, and those who said deer suffered. The report's findings were crystal clear: deer suffer horribly, and the council decided licences should not be renewed."

The Labour party welcomed the report and said it would help to inform MPs about hunting when the free vote on the issue, as promised in its manifesto, comes up before Parliament. Michael Meacher, the environment spokesman said: "I cannot commit Labour to instigating a similar report on fox hunting, but . . . I certainly believe there should be such a report."

The idea was also supported by the Liberal Democrats who said the party "would by happy to have a scientific review of fox hunting. We support a proper informed debate and a free vote." Conservative Central Office said it would not comment.

Meanwhile the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals said that it would fund independent research into whether fox hunting is cruel if the new government does not put up the money immediately after the election.

The National Trust, which spent £165,000 on its deer-hunting report, said it could not afford a similar amount to investigate fox hunting as well. The trust council believes that the money should be provided by the Government, since it is a national issue and affects many landowners.

The RSPCA director-general, Peter Davies, said he was "delighted" at the Trust's decision to remove deer hunting licences on its land. The RSPCA would like similar research into fox hunting to be funded by the National Trust or by the Government, or jointly with the British Field Sports Society.

Alistair Jackson, director of the Master of Foxhounds Association, said: "We would consider supporting a sensible balanced study into foxes, if such a study could be designed. The fox is a serious pest, one that will be controlled whether there is hunting or not."

The League Against Cruel Sports spokesman, Kevin Saunders, said the evidence that fox hunting was cruel was already overwhelming. "More research will be used as an excuse to put off a vote in Parliament to ban hunting with hounds."



Open art surgery . . . Kelly's casts of body parts have caused controversy PHOTOGRAPH: CHARLES OMMANNEY

Two arrested in 'stolen corpses for art' probe

Kamal Ahmed

A FORMER employee of the Royal College of Surgeons has been arrested after a police investigation into the source of body parts used in sculptures by artist Anthony-Noel Kelly.

The man, who has not been named, was arrested on April 7, five days after police arrested Mr Kelly, aged 41, on suspicion of using stolen body parts and burying bodies without consent. Some parts were dug up in the grounds of Romden Castle in Kent, the seat of Mr Kelly's family.

Both men have been released on bail pending further inquiries by the Metropolitan Police.

Mr Kelly, a technician at the Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture in London, uses body parts to make plaster casts, which he sprays with silver and gold gilt. He was said to have admitted using his dead grandmother's body in one work.

In January, Mr Kelly's cast of a dead man's head went on sale at a London gallery for £4,500. It did not sell.

The use of corpses is strictly controlled by the Anatomy Act of 1984, which makes it a criminal offence to use body parts without consent. Licences are granted by the Department of Health for those using cadavers for medical research and teaching.

The investigation began in January, after the Inspector of Anatomy, Laurence Martin, responsible for upholding the Anatomy Act, read an article about Mr Kelly's work in the Independent on Sunday. It said Mr Kelly acquired body parts from a medical school and took them to his refrigerated studio in Clapham, south London.

Courts to rule on drugs' cost

Clare Dyer

A MAN whose health authority refused to pay for a £10,000-a-year drug after consultants prescribed it is bringing a high court test case that will plunge the courts into the controversy over the health service's rationing of expensive drugs.

Ken Fisher, who has multiple sclerosis, has been given the go-ahead, backed by legal aid, to challenge North Derbyshire health authority's refusal to fund his treatment with the new drug beta interferon.

His case is expected to come to court within the next month after his solicitors, Irwin Mitchell, asked for it to be expedited because his condition is deteriorating. Only patients who are still fairly mobile can benefit from the drug, and Mr Fisher, aged 33, from Dronfield, near Sheffield, can walk only a few metres.

The case raises questions about the extent to which health authorities can refuse to pay for treatment despite a decision by doctors that it could benefit the patient. The courts are reluctant to interfere with authorities' discretion to allocate resources as they see fit, but tend to look askance at blanket bans.

The issue is of growing concern as costly new biotechnological treatments come on the market for previously untreatable conditions. Aricept, the first drug to delay the onset of symptoms in Alzheimer's disease, became available in Britain last week amid warnings that the NHS cannot afford the £1,000-a-year-cost for all the patients who could benefit. Some 200,000 people in Britain have mild to moderate Alzheimer's.

● Ministers were forced on the defensive last week over health service pay after a survey showed that chief executives of NHS trusts had received pay rises twice as high as those of nurses and doctors.

Labour accused the Government of letting the pay of top health managers "gallop out of control". But Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, said terms were set locally and pitched at levels necessary to attract and keep quality leaders.

The pay figures were produced by Incomes Data Services, an independent research group, after studying annual reports of 396 trusts for 1995-96. At 274 trusts where figures were comparable with those of the previous year, the average basic salary of chief executives had risen by 6.2 per cent and average total remuneration by 5.9 per cent. This compares with a rise of 3 per cent for nurses and 2.5 per cent for most doctors.

According to IDS, the typical basic salary of a chief executive rose during the year studied to £62,000.

Top policeman reads riot act over 'zero tolerance'

Duncan Campbell

ONE of Britain's most senior police officers has warned that the "zero tolerance" style of policing could lead to riots.

The Home Secretary, Michael Howard, and his Labour counterpart, Jack Straw, have voiced their support for the idea, which originated in New York.

Charles Pollard, Chief Constable of Thames Valley and a former deputy assistant commissioner with the Metropolitan Police, said that the fashion for "zero tolerance" — which involves sweeping graffiti artists, beggars, traffic light "squeegee merchants" and winos off the streets — has blinded the public to its weaknesses.

"People would have you believe that the falls in crime experienced in New York are the result solely of the new style of policing," said Mr Pollard. "This is nonsense." He said there had been remarkable falls in crime in other areas where the policies were not applied, but they attracted little public attention.

"It is being seen as a panacea," said Mr Pollard. "It is time to say 'stop'. It seems nice and simple, but it is just simplistic."

In an essay published this week by the Institute of Economic Affairs as part of a book entitled Zero Tolerance: Policing a Free Society, he argues that while the policy can bring short-term gains, there are significant dangers.

"The problem is that sustained policing of this sort ends up targeting minorities within communities," Mr Pollard said.

"That was the case in Brixton in 1981 during Operation Swamp, which would have been described as 'zero tolerance'." That had led to riots, he said, as had a similar policy in Los Angeles in the early 1990s.

He said the falls in the crime rate in New York had led people to think there was one answer to all crime. New York had been given an extra 7,000 officers on top of a very high existing ratio of police to public. A new commissioner of police, Bill Bratton, had also dramatically improved the bad morale of the NYPD force. These were more significant factors than just the "zero tolerance" policing, said Mr Pollard.

Policing could be done only with the co-operation of local communities, local government agencies and businesses, not in isolation. He pointed to reductions in crime in Reading, within his police area, which had seen a 46 per cent fall in domestic burglaries after various moves were undertaken.

The attack on "zero tolerance" was later rebutted by leading politicians of all the main parties.

John Major said the policy should be aimed mainly at professional criminals, rather than inadequates.

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, dismissed the claim that "zero tolerance" could lead to riots. "If you refuse to tolerate the small crimes, you can create a different climate within local communities," he said.

Violence at London rally

Alex Bellos and Duncan Campbell

POLICE have said they will take no further action against the man arrested for the attempted murder of a police officer at a demonstration last weekend in Trafalgar Square, London.

The event came after a march organised by Reclaim the Streets (RTS), the most visible of a disparate network of environmental and civil liberties direct action groups, in support of Merseyside dockers.

The man had allegedly driven a van at 40mph through a police line into the square. The van contained a sound system that formed the centre of the protest, a huge street party with up to 5,000 people dancing in front of the National Gallery. RTS is most famous for its impromptu street parties which, since the first in Camden, north London, in 1995, have been held all over Britain.

RTS put on its party as a continuation of the March for Social Justice, in support of 500 Liverpool dockers sacked 19 months ago for refusing to cross picket lines.

About 20,000 people walked from Kennington Park, south London, to Trafalgar Square, following a brass band, pipers and union banners. Violence flared as it passed Downing Street. Paint, smoke-bombs and bottles were hurled at officers. A man scaled No 10's railings while another climbed into the Foreign Office, threw out papers and bared his bottom.

E. Coli report rebukes Government

Erlend Clouston and Lawrence Donegan

THE Government took another battering last week when the report into Scotland's fatal *E. coli* outbreak demanded an end to its "light touch" in the implementation of food hygiene regulations.

The Pennington inquiry, set up after 18 people died in the world's second worst incidence of *E. coli* poisoning, called for butchers to be subject to a stricter licensing regime that is expected to cost the industry £187 million.

But the 10-person inquiry team backed away from its earlier recommendation that separate staff should sell cooked and raw meat. It also declined, for legal reasons, to attribute blame for the November epidemic, which affected 496 people across central Scotland.

The Government conceded all 32 recommendations put forward by the £45,000 inquiry, which include the introduction of *E. coli* awareness programmes for farm workers, possible steam-cleaning of carcasses in abattoirs, and lessons in food handling for schoolchildren.

Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, said the inquiry's call for a simplified regulatory system was consistent with government attempts to reduce the burden on small businesses. However, Professor Hugh Pennington, the inquiry chairman, pointedly refused to endorse the recent "graduated approach" to regulation enforcement.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats said the report justified their demands for independent food agencies. George Robertson, the shadow Scottish secretary, called the report "a damning indictment of the Government's betrayal of the health of the British people". Jim Wallace, the leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, accused the Government of "playing Russian roulette with public health".

Paul Santoni, the solicitor representing 60 victims of the bacterium, said the report was a whitewash. "It does not deal with the circumstances which led to the outbreak, and to that extent he has not fulfilled the mandate given to him by the Secretary of State."

However, the report was welcomed by John Barr, the butcher in Wishaw, Lanarkshire, whose premises were linked with the epidemic. He said he was one of the first Scottish butchers to implement the recommendations in Prof Pennington's interim report in January.

Mr Barr was charged in the same month with "culpable and reckless conduct" in connection with the supply of cooked meat. This does not relate to the eight pensioners who died after eating steak pies delivered by Mr Barr to a Sunday lunch at Wishaw Old Church.

The proposed licensing is intended to bring butchers into line with the tougher standards of the 1995 Meat Hygiene Regulations, which currently apply only to producers.

● New data from Reading university's Department of Agriculture show that BSE will not be eradicated from British cattle for 10 more years. The report is being considered by the Government's scientific committee advising on the crisis, despite ministers' attempts to ignore the evidence.

The research deals a serious blow to chances of having the international beef export ban lifted quickly. The Government has previously assured the European Commission that BSE will die out naturally by 2001.

'Avalanche' of cases hits review body

Duncan Campbell

THE COMMISSION investigating alleged miscarriages of justice does not know whether it can cope with the volume of cases being referred to it, its head said last week, while dismissing concern at his being a senior freemason as "unjustified paranoia".

Sir Frederick Crawford, chairman of the Criminal Cases Review Commission which came into being earlier this month, said that it had 251 cases to consider already, and new ones were expected at a rate of six a day. This was three times as many as the Home Office had dealt with. "We don't know if we can cope," said Sir Frederick. "No one knows."

The commission believes that the funding given it by the Home Office is several hundred thousand pounds short of what it needs for its work, and also believes there is uncertainty about the willingness of the police to carry out costly re-investigations on its behalf.

Asked about his membership of an élite branch of the freemasons, revealed last year by the Guardian, Sir Frederick said: "If I was involved in any case in which there was a conflict of interest, I would withdraw." He said he had been a freemason for 40 years and had never shown any preference to anyone because of it.

The commission has started on 41 new cases, on top of the 210 cases passed to it by the Home Office, which formerly handled cases of alleged miscarriage of justice. There are 13 commissioners, 25 case workers, and a total staff of 65 based in Birmingham.

Asked about the case of James Hanratty, which the Home Office had indicated was almost complete, Sir Frederick said he had not seen the files and did not know whether they had arrived.

He could not say how speedily cases such as that of the M25 Three would be dealt with. One of the three, Raphael Rowe, is on hunger strike.

Sir Frederick said he was expecting an "avalanche" of cases. Other commissioners were optimistic about its role. Jill Gort, a barrister and one of the few members with defence experience, said she was impressed by the commitment of her fellow members to restoring confidence in criminal justice.

Pinhead politics – and it ain't over yet

COMMENT
Peter Preston

A NOTE of sonorous, sombre alarm rolls from Anthony King, professor of government and luminary of the Nolan Committee. "This election," he writes, "may only be recalled as 'Neil Hamilton's election'. The big issues of 1997 — notably Britain's future in Europe and how the national economy should be managed after polling day — are not being addressed." Fortunately, adds the prof, "there is still time".

Yea, verily. More time to discuss the nature and detail of the Tories' 22 tax rises since 1992, not to mention their 25 tax reductions. More time to track down John Major's 92 broken promises (T Blair) or Tony Blair's five U-turns (J Major).

More time to decide if Labour's leader is "cracking under the strain and has sold every principle he had in the pursuit of power" (M Heseltine). More time to tell your "tax burden" from actual fivers moving from pocket to Inland Revenue every week. More time to decide whether Labour will or won't privatise air traffic controllers, whether it has such a plan or no such plan.

It was all, said a woman on Vincent Hanna's late, late show, like Groundhog Day — the Bill Murray comedy in which he woke up every morning, switched on the radio and found the previous 24 hours played over again. Time standing still.

Heaven defend Tony King, in short. But nobody, given a chance, wanted to discuss any of his "big issues". And consider (for a Groundhog second) what it would all have been like without Tatton.

We owe Neil Hamilton a certain debt of gratitude. Suppose, in 1995, discovering that 300 years of parliamentary privilege prevented him from suing the Guardian, he'd merely sat back and cried foul, not burrowed frenetically away to get the law changed. Then he and Tim Smith, protesting unrequitable innocence, would be heading for sleepy re-election.

Suppose, in 1994, he'd gone straight to Sir Gordon Downey. Then even the lugubrious workings of the Privileges Committee might be over by now. Suppose that he hadn't pulled out of his libel case, asking the Guardian to substantiate its unsubstantiated charges and, by so doing, substantiated them.

It required, in sum, exceptional brilliance to wind up as last week began with Martin Bell putting on his white suit for the cameras. It required renewed brilliance, once the early buzz had faded, to ambush Bell before a forest of TV cameras in a thicket of soundbites. And it required the brilliance of stamina undiminished to field Mrs H as his iron old lady.

"I am the organiser and the administrator," said Christine proudly. "I am very efficient, so I have just taken that side over, and Neil lets me get on with it." Alas, none of the interrogating ladies managed to ask her how, with bemusing inefficiency, she'd contrived to lose all Neil's vital diaries from his days with Harrods.

You could, day after day, hear a dismal squeal emanating from somewhere just over the Cheshire skyline. It was the grinding of Central Office teeth. It was the failure to get this duo dumped. It was the sound of Mr Major, without escape route, having to say that if he were a Tatton voter, he'd vote for Neil.

Since I've never thought that this squalid episode should cast a blight over the vast majority of honest, hard-working MPs, there is no rejoicing as it grows and grows. But that's electioneering. Mr and Mrs Hamilton intend to be famous for 15 years, not 15 minutes.

And the point, for this campaign, is that you have human beings on display stripped of the usual political persiflage. Bell has given up a career and is launched on a drama. Mr and Mrs Hamilton have everything at stake, at least until Downey awakes in the snooze of summer.

Poor old Jimmy Goldsmith, launching his crusade to an audience of dead fish in Newlyn. He should have tried standing in Tatton, too.

Meanwhile, it was the things that weren't said which seemed to matter most. Did you know that The Antiques Show on BBC2 snaffled 17 per cent of the audience, comfortably defeating a Panorama moved to 8.30pm prime time? That EastEnders, just before, had 14.1 million viewers, and David Dimbleby trying to duff up Mr Blair saw this shrink to a mere 1.6 million? That the BBC Nine O'Clock News is a third down since election coverage started?

Such facts, usefully assembled by Alexandra Frean of the Times, are about more than TV coverage. When you see the Sun leading on "Lesbian cops brawl over love rival", you know that the punters are voting already with their penny pieces.

We're used, in this maturely soporific democracy of ours, to turning out to do our duty on polling day. We click our tongues over "young voters" who, supposedly, fail to recognise the majesty of the process. But in the dogfight proper, what actually happened last week?

The polls created an early frisson as Mori contracted Labour's lead to a bare 15 per cent. But ICM showed no such lurches, and Gallup and Harris merely danced on the spot. Labour might have been showing strain — indeed, Labour with new bags to the eyes and new croaks of anxiety, was showing strain.

The awkward truth — ever more evident with every passing, droning day — is that neither Mr Blair nor Mr Major has yet managed to contrive any palpable difference, any fresh connection with the electorate. And that this caravan of arid inevitability is probably burying Paddy Ashdown, too, beneath a blanket of torpor.

The Conservatives have long since begun to press the buttons of fear. The umbrella theme is Trust. It surfaced the moment Tony Blair got his Edinburgh parish councils in a twist. (Whatever happened to devolution, or what one friendly Big Issue seller calls the West Loathing question?) That, via the great unwatched Dimbleby, produced the thesis that Young Lochinvar was a frail blossom, wiltable under pressure. There was the mess over privatisation and a flurry of revamped New Labour pledges which showed either that a) they were "scoundrels" who'd say anything to get elected, or b) finally, masterfully clearing the last Old Labour decks when nobody could make a fuss.

This, in one sense, is promising ground. New Labour has changed so much, so often, that its assorted spokespeople seem to have problems remembering which coded formula of evasion is current. There are wobbles and cracks.

But because the formulas are, at root, about very little, the cracks are only hairline. And Mr Blair's truth-telling reputation (55 to Major's 39 on Gallup) and promise fulfilment quotient (51 to 27) are pretty impregnable anyway since he hasn't had a chance to break any proper promises yet.

The problem, on all sides, will be finding a way of talking to ordinary people and not merely themselves. Mr Blair, in particular, must want more than a yawn for a mandate. New Labour, Old Cynicism? It doesn't sound right.

Yet there's an underlying discomfort about these pinhead politics. They're playing it as it is, because that's the way they think we want it. Even Margaret Thatcher has turned Baroness Bland. There she was, without a blush to crack her pancake matt, praising six and a half years of Mr Major's "magnificent stewardship".

Ye Gods! What time's the next train to Tatton?

Comment, page 12



A moment of confrontation as Neil Hamilton and his wife, Christine, confront Martin Bell at a news conference PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER THOMOND

War reporter 'ambushed'

CONSERVATIVE activists in Tatton defied the party leadership last week by adopting Neil Hamilton, the former minister at the centre of the cash-for-questions affair, amid angry and chaotic scenes.

Martin Bell, after hearing of the result, dropped his earlier conciliatory approach and challenged Mr Hamilton in an open letter, in which he accused the former minister of a series of lies.

He said he was prepared to give Mr Hamilton the benefit of doubt on the allegation that he had received cash for questions, but said his campaign would now concentrate on Mr Hamilton's admitted wrongdoings.

"Even if you are innocent of the charge which you dispute, they make you unfit to hold the office of MP for Tatton," said Mr Bell.

Hours earlier, in an extraordinary exchange, Mr Bell was ambushed at the open-air press conference to launch his candidacy at The Heath, Knutsford, by Mr Hamilton and wife, Christine. Confronting the white-suited TV reporter, Mr Hamilton and Mrs Hamilton asked to be given the benefit of the doubt.

In Tatton, both Labour and Liberal Democrats voted overwhelmingly to withdraw their candidates and offered their support to Mr Bell as an independent candidate.

Euro rebels rock Major's campaign

Guardian Reporters

JOHN Major's hopes of maintaining party unity over Europe in the general election campaign were blown apart after it emerged that dozens of Tory candidates — including senior figures and even one minister — had defied the Government's "wait and see" policy on the single currency.

Dame Angela Rumbold, a Conservative vice-chairman, on Monday raised the spectre of a Europsceptic column at the heart of the party machine when she declared her outright opposition to a single currency.

Speaking on BBC television, Dame Angela, MP for the increasingly marginal Mitcham and Morden in southwest London, said: "As a matter of principle I can't say I haven't made up my mind because I have made up my mind."

In her election address Dame Angela says: "No to more powers for Brussels. No to a single currency. Yes to a referendum before any further steps of constitutional importance are taken."

Party officials made light of Dame Angela's stance, saying that only ministers were expected to toe the Cabinet line

But with Tory hopes of a dramatic campaign breakthrough dampened by two new opinion polls that both showed Labour's lead scarcely dented at 22 points, Mr Major's pleas for Tory unity on Europe were further undermined when a junior agriculture minister, Angela Browning, also ignored his appeals that MPs should toe the government line in their election material.

Mrs Browning, defending Tiverton and Honiton, states her opposition to Britain's entry to European Monetary Union in an election newsletter. The consequence of a single currency would be "the end of sovereignty of the nation state and if that is what is offered, I have made it very clear that I will not support it".

This extraordinary defiance was being seen at Westminster as a coded acceptance that the Tories will not win the election, as she had been tipped for promotion.

The scale of Mr Major's problems was underlined as it emerged that as many as 150 candidates had taken advantage of a millionaire businessman's offer of financial support in exchange for them opposing the single currency. Paul Sykes, an occasional financial contributor to Tory party funds, said: "I think the final number of candidates will be closer to 200. It is going to cost me around £500,000. But it's worth it."

What makes these moves significant is that Conservative Central Office has been seen to be pushing Mr Major to the right throughout the running battle over Conservative European policy.

Labour demanded the dismissal of Mrs Browning, quoting Mr Major's own word on BBC Newsnight last month that "if ministers dissent in any respect, they should not expect to remain in office".

But Mr Major insisted that Mrs Browning did not break the terms of the Cabinet's "wait and see" compromise on the single currency issue. Her election newsletter said she would not support the end of sovereignty of the nation state implied by the single currency.

The Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown said the Tories "have gone from cash for questions to cash for quotes in one single bound".

Meanwhile the Labour party leader, Tony Blair, tried to inject "vision, passion and conviction" into the general election campaign on Monday by devoting his biggest speech so far to education, traditionally Labour's strongest issue.

He announced an extension to specialist schools in a move that will be interpreted as Labour stealing more of the Tories' clothes. In a direct lift from Conservative policy, he disclosed that a Labour government will extend the Conservatives' Private Finance Initiative throughout the country to cope with an estimated £3 billion maintenance backlog.

In retaliation, the Prime Minister made his most personal attack of the campaign against Mr Blair, accusing him of "shameless hypocrisy" in choosing a grant-maintained school for his children.

Mr Major said: "The truth is what he wants for his own children he doesn't want for yours ... This isn't a manifesto, it's a shameless contract with hypocrisy."

All the Guardian and Observer election coverage and more can be found on the Election Website: http://election.guardian.co.uk

In Brief

THE family of Wayne Douglas, the burglary suspect whose death in police custody triggered riots in Brixton, has won permission to challenge an inquest ruling that he died accidentally.

MORE than a dozen British paratroopers who were injured in a Nato exercise are to sue the army for negligence, claiming they were ordered to jump from an aircraft when wind speeds were beyond accepted safety levels, because "prestige was at stake".

MINERS' leader Arthur Scargill, at the launch of his Socialist Labour party's "revolutionary" manifesto, pledged to introduce a top rate of tax of 80p in the pound and a return to public ownership for all British industry.

SUICIDE is becoming an increasing problem in prisons, with deaths tripling over the past decade, according to penal reform campaigners who say there is one prison suicide on average every five days.

WEETABIX, the breakfast cereal company, has made a donation of £250,000 to the Conservatives, becoming the largest corporate donor.

TAUNTS from the press about Labour frontbencher Mo Mowlam's ballooning weight have forced her to reveal that she has been undergoing treatment for a brain tumour.

MATTHEW WILSON, the "unteachable boy" who triggered a bitter disciplinary row at a junior school in Worksop, Nottinghamshire, last year, has won a glowing report from his new school, three miles away.

THAMES Water, which wastes nearly four out of every 10 gallons of drinking water through damaged pipes, has been ordered by Ofwat, the water regulator, to produce quarterly leakage returns. Ofwat can remove the company's franchise if it fails to improve performance.

CUSTOMS officers seized cocaine with an estimated street value of £20 million from a ship en route from Colombia at Avonmouth, near Bristol.

A COUPLE who made pornographic videos and sexually assaulted their young daughters were jailed after a judge told them they had descended into the "pit of human degradation". The man was jailed for life and his wife for 15 years.

THE cost of reprogramming computers to cope with the millennium was put at £31 billion — three times higher than previous estimates.

James Lewis is on holiday

Leaders fish for quota votes

Guardian Reporters

A RENEWED European attempt to resolve the overcapacity of the fishing industry failed in Luxembourg on Monday. The long-running controversy over quotas remains unresolved.

On Monday both John Major and Tony Blair promised Cornish fishermen that they were prepared to disrupt agreement at the crucial June meeting of European Union heads of state if there is no decision to overhaul the Common Fisheries Policy.

The Prime Minister's pledge to disrupt the Intergovernmental Conference in Amsterdam prompted Mr Blair to match it even as he and Paddy Ashdown mocked the Government for "vacuous sabre rattling", which has been as ineffectual over fish as it has been over the beef crisis.

With the next formal review of the fisheries policy not due until 2002, neither side can expect much progress in Amsterdam, where the majority will try to kick it into touch for bilateral talks with Spain.

The EU fish commissioner, Emma Bonino, reminded London that further fleet reductions are needed and that quota selling is a free trade issue that could rebound against British attempts at "protectionism".

In his latest attempt to put Europe at the centre of the campaign, the Prime Minister used his visit to threatened Tory marginals in Cornwall — St Ives, plus Falmouth and Camborne — to say that he was not worried about leaving Britain isolated in Europe if he felt it was in the country's best interests.

"The IGC will not come to a successful conclusion until we are satisfied that among our other objectives the problem of quota-hopping is satisfactorily resolved," he said.

Fishery policy rules limit the catches of each fishing vessel under the quota system. "Quota-hopping" allows foreign trawler owners, usually Dutch or Spanish, to buy fish quota licences from British fishermen and then sell the catch abroad. Up to 40 per cent of the UK quota for some species is controlled by foreign-owned vessels.

As the Lib Dems demanded a full review of the fisheries policy, Labour said ministers had failed to have the quota problem resolved at the last 10-yearly review in 1992.

But even though Labour is keen to mend fences with Europe, Mr Blair said: "Where Britain's interests are at stake we are perfectly prepared to be isolated, of course we are. What we don't seek is a policy of perpetual isolation . . . We are perfectly prepared to take a very tough line on this indeed. But we've got to make sure the tough line works. What has happened with the Conservatives in Europe is that their rhetoric is tough, but what they get is failure."

IRA sniper's rifle seized

David Sharrock

SECURITY forces in Northern Ireland last week celebrated a significant breakthrough in their fight against the IRA after finding and seizing a high-velocity sniper's rifle that may have been used in nine fatal attacks on police and soldiers since 1992.

The Barrett Light 50, it is understood, was one of two weapons seized during a day-long search close to Crossmaglen and the Irish border. A specially adapted car fitted with bullet-proof cladding was also found, along with masks and radio equipment.

The 5-ft long American sniper rifle is thought to have been responsible for the murder of Lance Bombardier Stephen Restorick on February 12 at a vehicle checkpoint in south Armagh.

The rifle was developed to penetrate armour and destroy equipment such as aircraft and radars. It is believed to have been smuggled out of the United States. The IRA may have two in its armoury.

Amid signs of a further escalation of IRA violence last week a policewoman was shot and seriously wounded in Londonderry.

The shooting followed overnight attacks on two army lookout posts in Roslea, Co Fermanagh, which were sprayed with about 40 bullets. The incident came amid speculation that the IRA was about to call a limited suspension of its violence for the duration of the general election campaign in a bid to maximise the vote of its political wing, Sinn Fein.

● Masked loyalist youths ransacked houses and stoned riot police and troops as rioting erupted in north Belfast last weekend, forcing eight Catholic families out of their homes.

The clashes came as heightened sectarian tensions saw 11 lorries and trailers burnt out in an attack on a haulage company in Portadown.

The growing violence prompted the Irish deputy prime minister, Dick Spring, to issue a direct warning to the republican movement. Continued IRA violence, he said, would lead to Sinn Fein's exclusion from future Northern Ireland peace negotiations.

"The situation is extremely tense," he added, "given places of worship on both sides being burnt, the attempted shooting of a reserve policewoman in Derry and the attitude taken by hardline Unionists over the marching season."

Exit of Zaire's corrupt despot

PRESIDENT MOBUTU of Zaire is about to become, in the White House's elegant phrase, "a creature of history". He is also the creation of history in which previous US administrations have played a very large part. In less elegant language we may conclude that this corrupt despot, who has inflicted such disaster upon his country, must be doomed now that his American chums have blown the whistle on him.

It has taken some time: Mr Mobutu worked with six American presidents before Bill Clinton in the three decades after gaining power with US military help. He was regarded by them, in the words of President Bush, as "one of our most valued friends" in Africa. This was at a lunch in 1989 when Mr Mobutu claimed preposterously that his country "observed the rule of law". His abuses of human rights were ignored or explained away as regularly as they were recorded by Amnesty International. In the 1980s President Reagan expressed admiration for Mr Mobutu's "assiduous efforts to remedy [Zaire's] economic problems". The 1970s slump in copper prices, on top of Mr Mobutu's maladministration, had hit Zaire badly. His solution, which won Mr Reagan's praise, was to bring in a team of World Bank and IMF advisers whose shock therapy reduced real wages to pitiful levels — encouraging corruption and crippling public services. The Zairean leader was hailed by US officials as "a voice of sanity and reason" in Africa despite the abundant evidence that he used his office for personal enrichment. What he delivered in return was a reliable base from which to stage covert operations in Angola and elsewhere, and a sort of stability — though at a high price — in the heart of the continent. The first is no longer needed; the second has succumbed to the many contradictions — social, economic and regional — engendered by his own misrule.

Western calls for an "orderly transition" are fine as a statement of principle, but not if it means trying to cobble together another patchwork of political opportunists in the capital. The frenetic political intriguing in Kinshasa should not be taken too seriously. Most of the so-called opposition around the short-lived prime minister Etienne Tshisekedi is almost as discredited as Mr Mobutu himself. The United Nations-sponsored peace negotiations in Johannesburg have been bypassed by the progress of the war and Western intervention is unlikely to be productive. The most useful action by Mr Mobutu's former foreign friends would be to sequester his mansions and freeze his bank accounts. They belong to the people of Zaire, whom history has treated so badly.

Politics and the social agenda

WHO SAYS the parties want to debate issues? Last month the Government produced the most radical pension plan since Lloyd George's People's Budget introduced pensions in 1909. With one stroke, the Conservatives were proposing to withdraw the welfare state's most expensive single programme from future generations. There would be no state pensions except for the poor, unemployed or long-term sick who could make no contributions. Everybody else would be on their own, with not even their private or occupational pension contributions earning tax relief. Not since the welfare state was launched would it have shrunk so dramatically. Yet since the launch, there has been silence. Moreover, social security is not the only arm of the welfare state where drastic restructuring looks necessary to meet the challenge of the 21st century.

Education, the issue that all three parties want to make their first priority, projects a misleading consensus: Beneath the welcome convergence on the need to raise standards lie fundamental differences. The Conservatives would press ahead with more selection at 11, more opting out and less power for local education authorities. Yet most schools are not clamouring for more powers. Most headteachers have no wish to become more involved with school transport, meals and budgets for children with special needs. A coherent education system requires co-ordination and planning. That is why Labour is right to restore such powers to local education committees. Yet neither major party addresses the looming crisis over funding in schools.

There is a more genuine consensus on health, a consensus that Labour strives hard to deny. Labour talks about abolishing the internal market but the purchaser/provider divide would remain, hospitals would still be autonomous, and many GP fundholders would not be abolished. What would change under Labour — and the Liberal Democrats — is public health policy with a new food safety agency independent of the farming lobby, a welcome ban on tobacco advertising, and new Health of the Nation targets that recognise the impact of poverty, unemployment and poor housing. All major parties duck the politically unpopular need to produce an explicit rationing scheme for health resources and none is yet ready to embrace the obvious solution to the withdrawal of long-term nursing beds from NHS hospitals: a compulsory insurance scheme for all.

No issue has been more widely debated with so little public enlightenment as law and order. There is an ominous consensus between the main parties that poses a serious threat to civil liberties. Prison doesn't work. Of course it's necessary, but the widespread damage it wreaks needs to be recognised along with the funds it absorbs. A prison population, which rose from 40,000 to 60,000 in four years, is projected to rise to 75,000 in the next eight. Say 20 more prisons at £600 million each and 35,000 extra inmates at an extra £1 billion a year in running costs. All this from two parties that want to freeze spending.

The Conservative spending programmes do not add up. They have slashed the annual rise in spending to one-fifth of the average of the last 18 years: a mere 0.4 per cent. Yet Labour intends to stick to this programme for the first two years and is committed to no further income tax rises for the next five. No party in such a straitjacket can meet the urgent needs facing headteachers, housing administrators and health managers, let alone tackle the stark inequalities which have emerged over the last two decades. A "radical" party would not leave the debate about changing the welfare state to the Tories. Take pensions: one option would be be to adopt the Australian approach and apply means tests to top earners rather than the bottom; the better-off you are, the less basic pension you get. At the top, there would be none. The detail is not important but a debate about principles is vital. The first goal must remain how best to protect those on modest incomes and the poor.

Hong Kong's right to march

THE SINS OF the past are catching up with Hong Kong, as its July 1 rulers say they will restore key provisions of old legislation on "civil liberties and social order". Is Beijing suggesting that British colonial rule was right to be repressive? The proposals go far beyond the original (pre-Patten) wording.

Bill Clinton has already signalled his concern by agreeing to meet the Hong Kong Democratic party leader, Martin Lee, this week. Imposing some limits on foreign funding of political organisations is not wrong in principle: there is an irony here — many in Britain might have welcomed some such legislation to prevent Hong Kong tycoons from bankrolling the Conservative party (the same tycoons who now support China's new restrictions). Some procedure is also needed in any society to regulate demonstrations. But the issue is not so much the proposals as the order of priorities that they reveal. Eight years after Tiananmen Square, China is still obsessed by hostile demonstrations in Hong Kong and foreign support for its critics, to the point of ignoring the damage caused to public opinion. Confidence in the new chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, has already slipped as a result of this clumsy move: and fewer abroad will be prepared to give Beijing the benefit of the doubt in the future.

On registration of societies, the proposed definition of "foreign political organisations" is far too broad and limits the right of appeal too narrowly to the Chief Executive. On public processions, the list of grounds where permission may be refused is far too vague — and much longer than the old British list. Does Beijing really want to appear more reactionary than the colonialists? If this is a consultation exercise, Mr Tung and friends should listen hard to what Hong Kong is actually saying.

Neither stick nor carrot works for Iran

Martin Woollacott

IT IS a story as old as politics itself, except that now the submachine gun does the work of the dagger. When the opponents of a regime plot against it from abroad, agents are dispatched to kill them, the action then being protested, with real or feigned anger, by those who sheltered the fugitives.

That is the classical essence of the modern tale to which a German court has just written another, but not necessarily last, chapter. In 1992, in an unprepossessing Greek restaurant in a working-class district of Berlin, three Iranian Kurds,dissident leaders and their translator, were shot and killed. Their murderers have now been found guilty, which was likely from the start.

But a far more prominent opponent of the clerical regime, former president Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, transformed the case by testifying that the decision to kill the Kurds would have had to have been approved by, among others, both the Iranian president, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and the chief spiritual guide, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. That removed the "deniability" which allows governments, if they desire it — as they usually do — to avoid confrontation with one another over covert killings.

With Iran, it has become commonplace to argue that there are rogue elements within the regime which take action without consulting the legitimate authorities. These authorities, the argument goes on, regret the actions but cannot denounce them because they have to keep up an appearance of unity while pushing their more moderate policies. Thus arose the picture of "good", rational, even liberal, sections of the Iranian regime locked in a silent struggle with lunatics and extremists.

Whatever truth there is in it the idea has undoubtedly served Iran well, allowing it to pursue a ruthless covert foreign policy while enjoying relatively good relations with most Western states. But Bani-Sadr painted a different picture, of a coherent regime that knew what it was doing, and did it according to well-established procedures.

That turned the case from an embarrassment into an international incident, and it led to the decision last week by the European Union to withdraw its envoys from Tehran. The EU may take further measures against Iran after a meeting later this month.

Yet what this means is unclear. Once before the EU withdrew its ambassadors, in protest over the fatwa against Salman Rushdie. They were back within a month, Rafsanjani crowed last week, making their apologies. Of Germany, which has been Iran's best friend and best trading partner in the West, Rafsanjani said, with sly qualification: "For at least a certain time, Iran will not be able to forget this unchivalrous act." The chances are, as he hints, that beneath the surface of events, Iran and Germany intend to continue their relationship much as before.

For one thing, even if German exports to Iran are down, Iran owes Germany huge amounts of money, and debt tends to ensure a certain intimacy. For another, the German secret service, which has cultivated special relations with its Iranian counterpart, almost certainly ensured some considerable time ago that Germany will not again be the scene of assassinations, even if it may be the headquarters for Iranian operations in Europe.

Finally, the European decision conceals large differences, between Britain at one extreme, and Greece and Italy at the other, over how to cope with Iran.

Any thought that the Mykonos case will lead to a new and harder Western policy against Iran is probably wrong. Indeed the United States, according to some reports, is reviewing its own tough policy, taking advantage of the change in leadership at the State Department to do so. Madeleine Albright said in France recently that the policies of "critical dialogue" and of "critical silence" had both failed.

The truth she pointed to is that there is no sure way of influencing Iran. Sanctions alone do not work, nor does dialogue. But the combination of the two, stick and carrot together, is not necessarily successful either. Iran reacts unpredictably to both.

Iran is an awkward, contrary society. Its existence is shaped, as in the past, by the fact that it is usually isolated within its own region and therefore has a special need for relationships with outside powers, while at the same time resenting those relationships and kicking against them.

WESTERN powers brought modern Iran into being, giving Reza Shah the push that gave him the crown, but could never consistently control it or him.

After the 1979 revolution, it is fair to say that no way of dealing with Iran has worked well. Critical dialogue has worked in ensuring trade advantages for some Western countries — including the United States, before it broke off most trade — and in occasionally providing useful channels to the Iranians.

The Germans claim it has helped in releasing kidnapped Westerners and arranging an exchange between Hizbullah and Israel.

But neither have stopped the regime from pursuing those it deems its enemies at home or abroad, or from supporting those it wants to support in other countries. Even now Iran is supplying the Sudanese government as the civil war in that country widens. Whether it was involved in the bomb attack on US troops in Saudi Arabia a year ago remains unclear.

Those who rule Iran today themselves suffered deadly attacks when they were in exile, and at home when first in power. They see their action abroad as a continuation of that civil war, as do their opponents. They are not going to be easily dissuaded from it by any combination of threats and inducements.

The best hope is to have a common plan and to keep it going over a period of several years, even if there could be no guarantee of the outcome. Certainly there ought to be a better course for the West than the muddle of appeasement and confrontation, some of the latter more rhetorical than real, that we have now.

Iran Official Linked to Saudi Bomb

David B. Ottaway and Brian Duffy

U.S. AND Saudi intelligence authorities have linked a senior Iranian government official to a group of Shiite Muslims suspected of bombing an American military compound in Saudi Arabia last year, American and Arab officials say.

Intelligence information indicates Brig. Ahmad Sherifi, a senior Iranian intelligence officer and a top official in Iran's Revolutionary Guards, met roughly two years before the bombing with a Saudi Shiite arrested on March 18 in Canada, the officials said. The man, Hani Abd Rahim Sayegh, had fled Saudi Arabia shortly after the June 25 bombing that killed 19 U.S. servicemen and wounded more than 500 others, Canadian court records show.

Sayegh, 28, has been identified by Canadian authorities as "a direct participant" in the truck bomb explosion at the Khobar Towers complex, and court documents identify him as a member of Saudi Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed group of militant Shiite Muslims.

The intelligence tying Sherifi to Sayegh has persuaded a growing number of officials in Washington and Riyadh of Iran's direct involvement in the attack, U.S. and Arab officials said last week. "Iran was the organizing force behind it," one U.S. official said.

But several other U.S. officials, noting the difficulty in assessing the fragmentary evidence, said they have yet to be firmly persuaded of Tehran's role. The FBI, which has had no direct access to Sayegh in Canada or to other Shiite suspects in Saudi Arabia, declined to comment on the information. "God knows, there is still a lot to do, a lot to look into," one government official said.



Protesters rally outside Bonn's embassy in Tehran last week after a German court ruled Iran had ordered an assassination in Berlin

If Iran, which denies all complicity, is proven to have been involved in the attack, the Clinton administration could come under pressure to retaliate militarily or economically. The United States sees Iran as the foremost sponsor of international terrorism, through its agents and through the underground action wing of Hezbollah, based in eastern Lebanon. The Lebanese Shiite political and social movement, which Iranian agents helped found in the early 1980s, has spawned Iranian-fostered replicas in other Arab countries with their own underground operatives such as those in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Last week, a German court said the "highest state levels" of the Iranian government had ordered the 1992 execution in Berlin of three Iranian Kurdish dissidents and their translator. The ruling caused most western European nations to recall ambassadors from Tehran.

Trade Dispute Over Cuba Defused

Paul Blustein and Thomas W. Lippman

THE CLINTON administration reached an understanding with the European allies last week that defuses at least until October an explosive transatlantic dispute over trade with Cuba.

Under the accord, the administration would press Congress in the next six months to water down the Helms-Burton law, which penalizes certain foreign companies investing in Cuba. In return, the European Union would take action against dealings in property confiscated by Havana and other regimes.

The agreement is tentative, requiring a great deal of further negotiation and approval by both U.S. lawmakers and European governments, and some key details have not been spelled out. The authors of the American law, Sen. Jesse Helms, R-North Carolina, and Rep. Dan Burton, R-Indiana, said they had not agreed to dilute their anti-Cuban measure and would carefully examine the Europeans' commitments.

Moreover, hours after the deal was made public, a controversy erupted over whether the administration agreed as part of it to grant the Europeans a waiver of sanctions aimed at curbing investment in Iran.

But the agreement may provide a framework for healing a serious irritant in U.S.-European relations over whether Washington has the right to use economic leverage to force other countries to accept its policy of isolating Fidel Castro's government.

It also averts a clash between the two economic superpowers at the World Trade Organization that threatened to erode the WTO's authority two years after it was formed to referee global trade disputes.

The action came three days before what U.S. officials described as a "drop-dead date" on Monday, when the Europeans were due to make their first submission to the WTO in a case arguing that Helms-Burton violates global trade rules. The U.S. side was planning to boycott the WTO proceedings on grounds that the WTO is unfit to judge a dispute primarily related to foreign policy rather than international business.

That scenario — which would have been acutely embarrassing to the fledgling trade organization — will not materialize now because the Europeans agreed to suspend their WTO case until October 15.

The understanding was reached after 50 hours of talks, said Stuart E. Eizenstat, the undersecretary of commerce who has served as the administration's point man on Helms-Burton. "[It] will help to promote a transition to democracy and the protection of property rights in Cuba and avoids bringing a foreign policy dispute before the WTO in Geneva," he told a news conference.

But Eizenstat acknowledged the deal faces big hurdles as talks move forward on details. In particular, it is unclear whether the Europeans will sufficiently impress Capitol Hill with the still-unspecified measures they have agreed to take against dealings in property confiscated by the Castro regime and others.

The lure to Congress is the proposed extension of such restrictions beyond Cuba to other countries. If it is not satisfied, Congress may not fulfill the U.S. part of the proposed bargain by taking some of the sting out of Helms-Burton. The law, passed last spring, penalizes foreign companies for "trafficking" in land and factories that the Cuban communists expropriated from U.S. citizens.

Eizenstat said he had consulted leading members of Congress, including Helms and Burton, and won broad support for his approach, but stressed "there is no guarantee" lawmakers will go along with the final deal. Helms hailed Eizenstat as "an able advocate for the freedom of the Cuban people," adding: "If our friends in Europe are indeed willing to lower their voices, and stop trafficking in stolen U.S. properties, that will be a significant achievement."

CIA Knew of Iraqi Chemical Weapons

Bill McAllister and Dana Priest

THE CIA revealed last week that it had received numerous warnings, starting in 1984, that chemical weapons were being stored in a remote Iraqi ammunition depot that U.S. troops blew up shortly after the Persian Gulf War, but said it had failed to adequately alert the military to the danger.

The disclosure contradicted three years of CIA accounts of what it knew about poison-gas weapons in Iraq, including a statement made a few weeks ago by acting CIA Director George J. Tenet. He said then that the agency had not specifically identified the Khamisiyah weapons site as a chemical-weapons area prior to its destruction by U.S. forces in March 1991.

The new description was provided in a 24-page report issued by an agency task force set up by Tenet last month. The head of the group gave what amounted to a rare public apology to Gulf War veterans.

"Intelligence support before, during and after the war should have been better," said Robert D. Walpole. "If you're looking for an apology that we should have given this information out sooner, I'll give that apology. We should have gotten it out sooner."

Although a full picture is not yet available, a knowledgeable official said that Tenet and CIA executive director Nora Slatkin felt "sandbagged" when they were told in recent months that, contrary to earlier agency statements, documents existed showing the CIA had information about the chemical weapons at Khamisaiyah before March 1991.

Walpole cited failures by agency personnel, including the "tunnel vision" of analysts during the war and afterward who failed to fully research the agency's records. He also cited their fixation on the wrong-headed belief that the Iraqis stored chemical weapons only in S-shaped buildings, unlike those at Khamisiyah. He said that the agency had "failed to underscore" the reliability of information indicating that Iraq had stored chemical arms at the site.

The agency disclosed cables and communications that laid out a series of warnings about Khamisiyah, beginning in 1984 and continuing until days before U.S. troops arrived there seven years later. A day before the ground war began, an unidentified U.S. ambassador had relayed to the CIA information that apparently came from an Iranian air force source giving the precise geographic coordinates for the Khamisiyah depot and saying that chemical weapons were there.

The CIA passed that information on to the U.S. military's Central Command, which is responsible for the Gulf region. But a CIA analyst the next day mistakenly confused the location with another depot, and cabled that the agency had been unable to identify a chemical facility at the suspected site.

Khamisiyah has become the focus of controversy because it was the only place where the U.S. government says American troops may have been exposed to Iraqi chemical weapons in the Gulf. When U.S. troops blew up the depot there, soon after routing Iraqi forces in the brief ground war, they were unaware that the massive underground facility contained hundreds of rockets containing the nerve gas sarin.

Many veterans believe that exposure to chemical weapons caused the myriad illnesses, known as Gulf War Syndrome, that afflict many who served in the war. However, there has been no evidence that low-level exposure can be linked to such ailments. Although government doctors do not dispute that the veterans are ill, researchers have been unable to identify any medical syndrome that explains the sicknesses. Some researchers have said that stress is the most likely cause.

In any case, the disclosure by the CIA is a fresh example in a series of contradictions and major revisions of what the government knew about chemical weapons in the Gulf War, when it had the information, and what it did with the data. The Pentagon denied for five years that any American troops had been exposed to chemical weapons, until it made what it called its watershed announcement about Khamisiyah 10 months ago.

Last week, Walpole said that earlier statements by Tenet, who has been nominated to be CIA director, and other CIA officials were based on their best knowledge at the time of their statements. Walpole said many of the records on which his report was based had only recently been discovered and declassified. But he added: "We have to have better sharing of sensitive and yet vital information. I'm talking about sharing internally as well as externally."

Some veterans advocates were skeptical about the revelations. "It seems that prior to, during and after the war they had a great deal of information" about the presence of chemical weapons where U.S. troops were deployed, said James Tuite III, a leading veterans' activist on the issue. "This is either evidence of an unraveling cover-up or an unprecedented intelligence failure."

Defense Department spokesman Bryan Whitman said the department has asked the Pentagon inspector general to investigate the revelations made by the CIA last week that the military's Central Command and the Army's regional command were informed of the likelihood of chemical weapons on the site prior to their destruction. That information, according to numerous accounts, was never passed to the troops on the ground near the area.

"We're still looking at where the information went and how it was disseminated," said Whitman.

Robyn Nishimi, executive director of the Presidential Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses, said her panel had access to some, but not all of the new CIA information. "Yes, there are a lot of big stones out there. We're turning them over as fast as we can," she said.

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Jet Flies Into Aviation Mystery

William Booth in Tucson

THE LAST thing the Air Force knows for certain is that at 11:58 a.m. on April 2, Capt. Craig David Button and his A-10 jet attack aircraft, carrying four MK-82 bombs, disappeared. Everything else has become one of the greatest mysteries in military aviation.

Plane and pilot remain missing, subject of a huge search and rescue operation. Air Force commanders believe the Thunderbolt II and its 32-year-old pilot probably went down more than 1,000 miles from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base here, where Button was training, and crashed in the snow-covered mountains 20 miles west of Vail, Colorado.



Craig Button: vanished

Did the pilot become incapacitated from fumes from an electrical fire, from a stroke, from a bird smashing into his jet? Did he steal the $9 million aircraft? Did he plan to commit suicide? Did he simply go mad?

"Everything is speculation until we recover the aircraft and pilot," said Col. Barry Barksdale, 355th Wing commander.

Nearly 200 flights by dozens of aircraft, ranging from U-2 spy planes to Army helicopters, have searched for the missing plane. The FBI is assisting in the investigation.

Button was living, at least on the surface, the dashing life portrayed in the movie "Top Gun." The son of an Air Force pilot who did tours in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, Button was young, single, handsome and athletic. He skied, rode motorcycles and flew jets. He was previously an instructor at Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio, Texas, where he taught new pilots to fly the Air Force's jet trainers, the T-37.

On April 2, seven weeks into flight school for the A-10, Button took off at 10:45 a.m. in the single-seat jet, following a lead aircraft plane piloted by an instructor and accompanied by another student pilot in a third aircraft.

For the first time in his career, he successfully fueled his A-10 in mid-air. Then the three planes, cruising at 300 knots, flew toward the East Tactical Range west of Tucson, where they would drop their bombs and learn how the twin-engine jets, known as Warthogs, felt on releasing their payload of 500-pound bombs from high-altitude dives. It was the first time Button had flown with real bombs.

As the planes approached the range, the instructor ordered Button and the other student into trail formation, one plane behind the other. Button acknowledged the command and was seen slipping into the third slot. But within the next two minutes, as his instructor attempted to reach him by radio to synchronize their on-board bombing telemetry, Button vanished.

There is nothing as serious in the Air Force as a missing pilot and plane. Within minutes, his two wingmates began searching the skies for him, attempting to contact him by one of the four radios aboard the Warthog. Silence. A command center went into immediate operation for search and rescue.

Because he was flying in formation, Button had not activated the transponder that would give radar monitors his identification numbers. On disappearing, he never did flip the two switches that would have made tracking his movements as simple as tracking a commercial jet.

Western Air Defense Sector military radar in southern Arizona, feeding its information to Barksdale, detected an unidentified aircraft flying straight, low and level on a northeast heading. The military assumes it was Button.

Initially, Barksdale felt his pilot may have been incapacitated and flying on the rudimentary autopilot aboard the Thunderbolt II, a device that could hold the plane in heading and altitude. But after the Air Force asked the public to report any sightings of a low-flying military aircraft, the first of hundreds of calls came in.

A retired Navy pilot reported seeing an A-10 north of Roosevelt Lake, east of Phoenix, flying low at about 6,500 feet toward the northeast. A fisherman said a similar plane roared right over his head. For two days, the Air Force searched the mountainous area west of Phoenix, believing the A-10 must have crashed there. Then, three 11-year-old boys said that on April 2, they saw the Warthog flying over Young, Arizona, at 12:20 p.m. — the exact time the A-10 would have reached the area after breaking formation, if he had maintained his cruising speed and headed in that direction.

Barksdale and his team asked controllers at Phoenix airport to look at their raw radar data from April 2. They found an unidentified plane moving northeast. More sightings and radar data came in. Once the plane, believed to be Button's A-10, reached Telluride, Colorado, Barksdale's team concluded the plane was being steered. The aircraft circled, changed direction and altitudes.

A man skiing near Beaver Creek, Colorado, called to say he had seen the plane, heard an explosion and saw smoke near Vail. So did a group of hikers, who heard an explosion. A U.S. Forest Service official reported a strange fire in the mountain — strange because fires do not normally break out amid so much snow.

One hypothesis at Barksdale's command centre is that Button may have dropped his bombs and flown north until he ran out of fuel and crashed. The last radar contact with the plane was at 1:41 p.m. near the New York Mountains west of Vail. Images generated by U-2 reconnaissance aircraft in western Colorado have identified a possible crash site near Vail.

Missing warplane

UTAH · COLORADO · ARIZONA · NEW MEXICO · MEXICO · Montrose · Phoenix · Tombstone · Barry M Goldwater Range · 100 miles · Route of missing plane · A-10 Thunderbolt

Route of plane
1 Departs Tucson, April 2
2 Refuels
3 Heads for bombing range
4 Seen at Young, Arizona
5 Disappears off radar

Companies Agree Code of Conduct

Paul Blustein

LEADING representatives of the U.S. apparel industry, responding to an anti-sweatshop initiative by President Clinton, have reached what they call an "historic" agreement with labor and human-rights groups on a code of conduct for factories at home and abroad.

Under the accord, tentatively reached by a presidential task force after a seven-hour meeting on March 31, clothing and shoe companies would voluntarily adhere to guidelines on wages and working conditions in factories they own or contract with. The guidelines include a maximum 60-hour work-week, panel members said.

Independent monitors would inspect factories worldwide, and an association formed to award a seal of approval to companies whose factories comply with the code. Although the specifics haven't been worked out, one possibility is that companies given the seal of approval would attach labels to their garments or shoes certifying their products have been made under non-sweatshop conditions.

"This is going to make a difference in a lot of people's lives who have been working in the industry," said Linda Golodner, co-chair of the 20-member task force and president of the National Consumers League, who said the panel is "extraordinarily close" to finishing its report but is still thrashing out a few details.

The report is to be released this week at the White House in a ceremony attended by Clinton, an administration official said. The president requested the establishment of the task force last August.

"It's historic. I don't know any other industry that has done this," said Stanley Levy, a task-force member and lawyer who represents apparel companies.

Among the corporate task-force members was Kathie Lee Gifford, the TV personality whose clothing line became a focus of the recent sweatshop controversy when allegations surfaced that workers making the garments were being exploited.

Other manufacturers represented on the task force were Karen Kane Co., Liz Claiborne Inc., L.L. Bean Inc., Nike Inc., Patagonia Inc., Phillips-Van Heusen Corp., Reebok International Ltd., Warnaco Inc. and the makers of the Nicole Miller and Tweeds labels. Also included were two representatives of labor unions, and representatives of organizations advocating human rights and corporate responsibility.

The agreement represents a hard-fought compromise among the disparate members over issues such as wages and working hours. Disagreements between the corporate and labor members threatened to cause a breakdown in recent weeks.

The meeting, held at a Washington law office, was attended by Gene Sperling, chairman of the White House National Economic Council.

The task force agreed a broad rule for a 60-hour maximum workweek, including a 48-hour regular week and 12 hours of overtime, task-force members said. In countries that legally cap the workweek at less than 60 hours, the lower figure would apply; and if workers genuinely volunteered to work longer overtime during busy periods, they could.

Army's Drills Draw Fire

Dana Priest

A DOZEN U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopters, their lights out, descended from the night sky on March 4 on a corner of Charlotte, North Carolina. They swooped among the high-rise apartment buildings, then dropped dozens of special operations troops, some with their weapons blasting, into an abandoned warehouse to capture a group of "terrorists."

Some terrified residents grabbed their guns. Others ducked into doorways. The 911 line went crazy, as did Mayor Pat McCrory's telephone line. "I could barely hear the callers because of the helicopter noise and the gunfire in the background," he recalled.

Neither McCrory nor his police chief was sure what was going on. But they had a clue: Three months earlier, two men in jeans and T-shirts from the secretive U.S. Army Special Operations Command had visited McCrory's office to ask permission to conduct urban counter-terrorism exercises they said would go unnoticed. McCrory signed a confidentiality statement agreeing not to disclose the event beforehand for national security's sake.

"We were misled," said McCrory, who was forced by the public outcry to kick the Army out of town after the first of what was to have been three days of urban anti-terrorism training. "How they thought you could come in and out without any disturbance is beyond me. It was like a blitzkrieg. People got their guns. Fortunately, no one was hurt."

Over the last three years, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command has conducted at least 21 such exercises in 21 U.S. cities, including Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Miami, Pittsburgh and Seattle.

The exercises have drawn fire from frightened residents who are not told beforehand that the several roaring helicopters flying in circles several hundred feet overhead late at night — blacked out except for one that keeps on its tiny red tail light for safety — are trying to get as close as possible to the buildings they appear about to crash into.

The confusion and fear caused by their invasion is compounded when residents see dark-suited figures sliding down ropes dangling from the choppers and then begin firing loud blanks from their assault weapons. The simulated sound of grenades and incoming artillery often follows, as does, in some cases, the sound of real, small breaching explosives used to blast open doors.

Arms Sales to Latin Friends

EDITORIAL

THE UNITED STATES is getting ready to reverse or at least relax its two-decades-old ban on sales of high-tech U.S. weaponry to Latin American militaries. This is a potentially troublesome development that ought to be kept in tight bounds.

The selling of hot warplanes to prestige-seeking Latin militaries with absolutely no claimed or demonstrated military requirement for them would seem dubious at best. But the countering idea has taken root that since the Cold War is over and since Latin America is democratic (except for Cuba), it would be intrusive and patronizing to rule out such transactions, especially for the politically worthier Latins.

This conclusion is seductive but wrong. These sales add internal authority to the military in countries where the civilian grip on power is weaker than it may seem. Chile, the likely first beneficiary of an American policy relaxation, is a fair example. To the eye, Chile appears a praiseworthy, model democratic free-market ally. But its military sector enjoys a rich, explicit constitutional privilege inconsistent with the American-favored notion of civilian control.

The official U.S. approach is to take each proposed arms-sale case on its merits. Chile and Brazil are shopping for modern aircraft to replace their generation-old squadrons. If Lockheed Martin — which builds F-16s and provides American jobs — isn't allowed to bid, the argument goes, a foreign company under no similar restraint will make the sale — first to Chile, then to Argentina, whose civilian officials are said to be lobbying the Clinton administration to modify any precedent-setting sale to Chile. Struggling civilian governments often will not agree with their military establishments on the need to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in scarce foreign exchange on warplanes in conditions of peace.

Another approach should be considered: encouraging Latin governments to work collectively to set their own guidelines of restraint in arms purchases. This would add a valuable new item — regional arms control — to a growing tendency of hemispheric cooperation.

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Japanese Nationalists Make Big Noise

Kevin Sullivan in Tokyo

IT WAS a rainy Saturday morning at Yasukuni Shrine, the symbolic heart of Japanese nationalism, where imperial soldiers who led Japan into World War II are enshrined and adored.

Wearing military fatigues and heavy black boots, 180 mock soldiers marched in place on the muddy parade ground. They were construction workers and engineers, many with paunches, some in their twenties, some past 60, weekend warriors who share a fanatical love of their nation and their emperor.

After singing the national anthem and bowing in the direction of the Imperial Palace, they climbed aboard 50 armored sound trucks and buses and took to the Tokyo streets. In the massive vehicles, many reinforced with quarter-inch steel plates, they circled a building where a moderate politician they hate was attending a meeting.

Screeching through loudspeakers atop the trucks so loudly that the assembled riot police covered their ears, they called the politician's name over and over for two hours: "Hatoyama! Kill Yourself! Hatoyama! Resign! Hatoyama! Kill! Kill! Hatoyama! Smash Him to Death!"

These men and thousands like them across the country are the face of Japanese nationalist fundamentalism. Like the militia movement in the United States, the camouflage-wearing, ultranationalist right-wingers here are fiercely conservative, organized in a loose military structure, well armed (by Japanese standards) and committed to violence and terrorism to press an agenda they equate with patriotism.

Police say there are nearly 100,000 of these right-wing activists. In recent years they have fired shots near a prime minister, shot and wounded two leading politicians, firebombed the parliament building and a political party headquarters, taken journalists hostage and shot at members of religious, political and media organizations they consider enemies.

To their way of thinking, Japan has apologized too much for World War II. They believe that Pearl Harbor was a natural and honorable reaction to U.S. policies in Asia; that Chinese estimates that as many as 300,000 Chinese were slaughtered in the city of Nanjing are grossly exaggerated; and that Japanese soldiers never forced foreign women into sexual slavery as "comfort women." The tens of thousands of women in question were willing prostitutes, they say.

These views, shared by a small but vocal number of members of parliament, are a key reason that Japan so often finds itself on the diplomatic ropes with China, South Korea and other neighbors.

Last year, the right-wing nationalists caused the sharpest flare-up in years in tensions with China by building a lighthouse on a cluster of disputed islands in the East China Sea and hoisting the Japanese flag on it. The right-wingers' bold assertion of Japanese sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands, known as the Diaoyus in China, touched off anti-Japan rallies in the streets of Taiwan, Hong Kong and China.

Officially, the Japanese government was not pleased that the nationalists had stirred up the touchy issue. But it responded with only the mildest public criticism. Politicians were loath to be seen as weak on an issue of Japanese sovereignty, and the right-wingers have support among more conservative elements in the government, particularly in Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's Liberal Democratic Party.

The right-wingers are an embarrassment for most Japanese and for the Japanese government. But the government's limited efforts to rein them in have led to a perception and fear in many Asian capitals that the right-wingers say publicly what many Japanese believe privately.

"The things they chant are indicative of Japan's unrepentance for their wartime record; they glorify and beautify their imperial heydays," said Lee Jung Hoon, a professor of political science at Yonsei University in Seoul. "This is not comforting for Korea, China and other neighbors."

Japan's right-wingers are united by a sense that Japan is not what it used to be. They believe their nation has become too much like the West and lost the things that make it uniquely Japanese. For the right-wingers, a society of equals united under a divine emperor breeds fairness and harmonious relations among people. They believe schoolchildren should sing a national anthem that honors the emperor and that the nation should be proud of a flag that flew over its troops in World War II.

The right-wingers are motivated by their belief that they must take up arms to fight to restore Japan's dignity, which they feel was stripped in the constitution written by American occupiers after the war. They believe the country's dignity has been eroded further by Japan's apologies for the war, and by scandals caused by dishonest politicians and businessmen.

Shinnosuke Inami, who has written extensively about right-wingers, said most Japanese people think the groups are "noisy and annoying." But, he said, "A substantial number of Japanese believe some of the [same] things . . . including that Japan was not single-handedly responsible for the war."

It is impossible to spend time in Tokyo without seeing and hearing right-wing activists. Many days and nearly every weekend, the sound trucks circle the Korean or Russian embassies to complain about territorial disputes. They roam the streets and wail their complaints about newspapers or magazines that criticize the imperial family.

The sinister-looking trucks rumble through busy city streets in caravans of converted buses or vans or jeeps, usually painted black and emblazoned with nationalist slogans, the rising-sun flag and the chrysanthemum, the imperial symbol. The windows are tinted black or covered with heavy wire mesh, making it impossible to see the driver.

The Japanese police consider the groups a threat to public safety and national security, and they have assigned nearly 1,000 officers to track them full-time.

"The activity of the sound trucks is not really a threat per se," said Shinichi Uematsu, a high-ranking officer in the National Police Agency. But he said crime by right-wingers is increasing; he said they have been charged with nearly 100 acts of violence or terror since 1989 — almost half of them personal attacks on political or media personalities.

Before the march began at the Yasukuni Shrine, the activists met to plan strategy in a small noodle shop nearby. "I am doing this because I love my country, and I like expressing that feeling," said Tamotsu Takase, 34, an executive in a construction materials company.

Others sounded more bitter. "Everybody is taking Japan lightly and looking down on us," one marcher said. "We must build a Japan that is respected."

One in 10 Americans Is Foreign-Born

William Branigin

THE GREAT American melting pot is becoming more like a stew, and an increasingly exotic and complicated one at that.

In its latest report on current population trends, the Census Bureau said last week that nearly one in 10 people in the United States is foreign-born, the highest rate in more than 50 years.

At 24.5 million, the number of foreign-born inhabitants stands at the highest level in U.S. history and is about 2 million more than reported in the previous survey in 1994. The foreign-born accounted for 9.3 percent of the total U.S. population, well below the high mark this century of 14.7 percent in 1910 but nearly double the rate since the low point in 1970 and continuing an upward trend since then.

The report — based on a March 1996 survey that included legal and illegal immigrants, naturalized citizens, students and temporary workers — appeared to provide ammunition for both camps in the ideological debate over immigration. The bureau reported that the foreign-born, especially the more recent arrivals, are more likely than natives to live in poverty, to be unemployed, to use welfare and to have less than a high school education.

On the other hand, the report said, the longer the immigrants stay here, the better they fare. Those who have lived in the United States for more than six years "seem to have recovered from their initial economic hardship," it said, and those who arrived during the 1970s generally are now earning as much as natives.

Given the economic conditions immigrants must overcome, on the whole, "it's a pretty dark picture," said Mark Krikorian, who heads the Center for Immigration studies and favors reducing immigration. "The problems that we have with immigration are only becoming sharper," reducing the ability of the United States to unify "the various strands of our people." In any case, he said, this "melting pot" tradition "is no longer considered politically correct."

Cecilia Munoz, deputy vice president of the National Council of La Raza, a leading immigrants' rights group, prefers the image of a "salad bowl" or a "mosaic," with lots of different colors and tiles that together create a "beautiful" and "vibrant" picture. "What's amazing about this country is that we're always in a state of transformation," she said. "And that is our essence as a nation."

Since immigration began to rise in the 1970s, the racial and ethnic makeup of the foreign-born population has changed markedly. While nearly 85.8 percent of the foreign-born who arrived before 1970s were whites, that proportion dropped to 62.1 percent for the first six years of the 1990s. During the same time frame, the percentage of blacks more than doubled to 8.7 percent and the proportion of Asians and Pacific Islanders tripled to 28.6 percent.

Hispanics, who may be of any race, accounted for 43 percent of newcomers since 1990 and 32.2 percent before 1970. By comparison, the bureau lists the current U.S.-born population as 84.2 percent white, 13.3 percent black and 1.6 percent Asian-Pacific islander, with 7.4 percent classified as Hispanic.

Mexico continues to be the leading source of immigrants, accounting for 27.2 percent of the 1996 foreign-born population. Next on the list are the Philippines, China, Cuba, India and Vietnam. Before 1970, the countries immediately behind Mexico included Germany, Italy, Canada and Britain.

Among the most controversial findings in the latest survey are numbers that suggest a growing influx of poor, uneducated and vulnerable immigrants at a time when the government is trying to move people from welfare to work and restrict immigrants' access to federal benefits. A third of the latest arrivals are living in poverty and 6.8 percent are jobless. Among natives, the poverty and unemployment rates are 12.9 percent and 3.8 percent.

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Lament for Our Common Culture

Jonathan Yardley

WE ARE ALL MULTICULTURALISTS NOW
By Nathan Glazer
Harvard University Press. 179pp. $19.95

BY WAY of explaining the title of this book, Nathan Glazer writes, "The expression 'We are all multiculturalists now' harks back to others that have been pronounced wryly by persons who recognized that something unpleasant was nonetheless unavoidable; it is not employed to indicate a wholehearted embrace." This is an understatement. Glazer's analysis of multiculturalism's rise and its uncertain future is bathed in gloom bordering on despair; We Are All Multiculturalists Now is a sad book, and it is difficult to imagine how it could have been otherwise.

Glazer, now in his mid-seventies, is a distinguished social scientist and social critic, the author of numerous books of his own and in collaboration with others, notably David Riesman and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Like many other intellectuals of his generation, he has followed a path from old-fashioned liberalism to what is now known, albeit often misleadingly, as neoconservatism. His convictions about equality and liberty have not faded over the years, but his faith in the capacity of government to protect these essential rights in effective ways has diminished; his faith in the good intentions of the American people themselves where race is concerned has, if anything, diminished even further.

That at least is the conclusion to be drawn from this brief but densely packed book, the essential argument of which is that multiculturalism "is the price America is paying for its inability or unwillingness to

The path toward multiculturalism looks less like a forward march than a disorderly retreat

incorporate into its society African Americans, in the same way and to the same degree it has incorporated so many groups." While it is true that Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, women, homosexuals and others have embraced the cause of multiculturalism, "the movement is given its force and vigor by our greatest domestic problem, the situation of African Americans."

As Glazer puts it elsewhere: "Blacks are the storm troops in the battles over multiculturalism. They are by far the largest group involved, they feel the issues most urgently, their problems are the most severe, and their claim that they must play a larger role in the teaching of American literature and history, indeed, should serve to reshape these subjects, has a far greater authority and weight than that of any other group. . . . Why have so many blacks moved against assimilation as an ideal . . . ? The answer, I am convinced, is to be found in black experience in America, and in the fundamental refusal of other Americans to accept blacks, despite their eagerness, as suitable candidates for assimilation."

That phrase, "despite their eagerness," doubtless will be strongly disputed by many African Americans. The black playwright August Wilson said, "If we choose not to assimilate, this does not mean we oppose the values of the dominant culture, but rather we wish to champion our own causes, our own celebrations, our own values." Perhaps so. But all the evidence indicates that this choice "not to assimilate" has been made less as an assertion of black pride than in reaction to white America's refusal to honor, in full, the legal and moral pledges it made in the 1950s and 1960s. The path toward multiculturalism looks less like a forward march than a somewhat disorderly retreat.

Whatever the case, it has led to what Glazer describes as the triumph of multiculturalism. Americans are well aware of this as it has affected higher education, with its emphasis on race, gender and class in the teaching of literature and history, with its deeply balkanized faculties and student bodies, with its desperate attempts to placate these seething minorities. But as Glazer points out, even in those universities most under multiculturalism's sway, it is still possible for students to receive a traditional education, assuming they know how to use their electives wisely. In the public schools, by contrast, students learn what the schools want to teach.

The difficulty, of course, is that multiculturalism as too commonly employed is an instrument not of reexamination or education but of mere feel-good amateur therapy. The "self-esteem" of the actual or imagined "victims" in the classroom is given first priority, even if that "self-esteem" is merely conferred rather than earned. Beyond that, if teaching fantasies or palpable falsehoods about some minority's history is a route to "self-esteem," then teach it the multiculturalists will and do. This question clearly troubles Glazer, as certainly it should, but in his earnest desire to be sympathetic he falls over backwards, coming dangerously close to endorsing the use of bad history as a way of raising minority students "in the esteem of their fellow students."

This is an uncharacteristic lapse. For the most part, although he sympathizes with those who bear legitimate grievances against the system, Glazer understands that multiculturalism does more to divide Americans than to unite them, that it emphasizes what is different about the many groups among us rather than what is similar.

Himself the product of assimilation as the term was once understood, Glazer is loath to witness its decline, if not its demise. But "the apartness of blacks is real"; "for this one group, assimilation, by some key measures, has certainly failed." In light of that, "Why should not multiculturalism, in the form of examination of one's group history, characteristics, problems, become compelling as a way to understand one's situation, and perhaps overcome it?" Answer that question however one may, this reality remains: Multiculturalism is here, and into the foreseeable future it is here to stay.



ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY RUSSO

Love and Whispers of a Lying Clan

Katherine Dunn

MR. SANDMAN
By Barbara Gowdy
Steerforth. 268pp. $24

SOME puritanical streak in many of us insists that art must be medicinal, glumly virtuous and difficult to swallow. Canadian Barbara Gowdy insolently explodes such constipated pretensions. Mr. Sandman, her third novel, cocks a snoot at conventions, both moral and literary, and is so brilliantly crafted and flat-out fun to read that she makes jubilant sinners of us all.

Gowdy's topic in Mr. Sandman is lies and the truth they are meant to conceal. It is the story of the lying Canary clan, Doris and Gordon Canary and their three daughters. Gordon is the unassuming editor of gritty potboilers in a small publishing house. His talents are appreciated best by the hopeless, drunken writers whose stacks of unpublishable manuscripts are the footstools and end tables in the modest Canary home. Gordon loves his family "a great deal, protectively and sheepishly," and he lies awkwardly and painfully to protect them from their own peccadilloes as well as his. "The truth," he always says, "is just a version." This maxim, distorted in the pleasantly bovine mind of his eldest daughter, Sonja, becomes "The truth is just aversion," a heraldic motto for the entire factually challenged family.

Doris is a charming and versatile diva of prevarication. Wielding the skills of her failed acting career with a nimble imagination, the restless housewife creates a constantly evolving art form ranging from manipulative little fibs to grand-scenario whoppers. Lies are her tool for getting what she wants, from cash in a pinch to a shield from unpleasant consequences.

Marcy, the smart middle sister, has her own terrors and passions to disguise. If the eldest daughter, Sonja, is too simple to lie, she has secrets to nurture, and her contented misunderstanding of herself and everyone else forms a web of unreality more impenetrable than the conscious fibbery of others.

Yet this is an enchantingly loving family. They lie tenderly to each other and eagerly believe each other's lies. Only the youngest, Joan, never lies, if only because she was dropped on her head at birth and is mute. Depending on whose version one believes, she is brain-damaged or a supernatural reincarnation or a great mind choosing not to besmirch herself with the vile dangers of language. Whatever the case, she is utterly unlike any of the Canarys. She is bizarrely gifted and completely mysterious, a tiny, fastidious near-albino beauty in a dark, robustly homely brood. She is terrified of strangers, hypersensitive to light and sound.

Joan is not the family shame, but their greatest treasure, the focus of their bewildered adoration. Each member of the family confides in her, pouring their secrets into her gorgeous silence. When she displays her astounding talents, the Canarys' faith in her genius is joyously vindicated.

Around this familial nexus swirl the concealed individual lives. The lies become flags signaling what is most dear and most terrifying — and the biggest lies are to conceal sexual identity and extracurricular escapades. These are not evil people. The worst they do is deny what they fear in themselves, that inner life they fear will be rejected by their loved ones, or society at large.

In her descriptions of these hidden passions, Gowdy's lyric use of ordinary language takes on a sensuality so sympathetic that the reader is led inevitably to suspect that these propensities may not be the darker side of the Canary clan at all, but their radiant best.

A Legend Sold Down the River

Peter S. Prescott

LIGHTING OUT FOR THE TERRITORY: Reflections on Mark Twain and American Culture
By Shelley Fisher Fishkin
Oxford. 265pp. $25

SHORT, dense academic tracts rarely provoke much controversy in the larger world, but Shelley Fisher Fishkin launched one four years ago with a book bearing the vexing title Was Huck Black? You could almost hear the systolic beat as the national blood pressure rose. No American over 12 had to ask "Huck who?"; young Finn is the white half of the greatest buddy story since The Song Of Roland.

Of course Fishkin, who teaches American studies at the University of Texas in Austin, didn't mean the question literally. She meant that the narrative voice Mark Twain created for Huck contained patterns of African-American speech. Except to unreconstructed white Southerners who would rather grab an axe handle than admit to any black influence in their culture, this came as no great surprise.

Fishkin's new book, which she calls "interconnected meditations," is a lighter affair, a travelogue conducted by a heavily informed tour guide who examines some of the places and artifacts that keep Mark Twain's memory alive in America today.

Her book has a theme: If Samuel Clemens was "a young boy who accepts slavery as natural and right and grows up to become a man who asserts that civilization began when slavery was abolished," how would the exploiters of his name and work deal with so complex a story? The answer that she found (I'm sure she expected nothing more) is that they don't. The persistence of racism in our society encourages deep denial: If you can't think something nice, don't think anything at all.

Thus when Fishkin goes to Hannibal, Missouri, Mark Twain's boyhood home and once a prosperous lumber town, she finds the place transformed into a tourist trap. Annually, during "Tom Sawyer Days," a boy and girl are chosen to be that year's official Tom and Becky. At the Mark Twain Book and Gift Shop the most popular souvenirs are bullwhips.

Bullwhips? And what might they have to do with the small-town values that these tourists look for? It's hard to say, for if there was anything unpleasant about Hannibal's slaveholding history, there's no sign of it now. Hannibal's Huck Finn may show up at a pageant, but not Jim, who might suggest the loss of boyish innocence.

Fishkin goes about her work with a passion. Most of those to whom she talks seem uneasy: Why does this nice lady insist on talking about slavery? It wasn't pleasant, but it's history now. "A whitewashed fence is one thing," Fishkin writes. "A whitewashed history is another . . . We lose stories of courage and spirit, of survival and defiance and struggle. And we lose a sense of the complex forces which shaped both the work of Mark Twain and the work of the nation."

Lighting Out For The Territory is an energetic report on how Twain's attitude toward race developed, how his works have been used and abused, and how the image of himself that he so carefully invented has been coerced into making guest appearances in other people's fiction, movies, plays, even Star Trek: The Next Generation.

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A large number of Chileans have failed to benefit from the economic boom PHOTOGRAPH: JONATHAN STEELE

Chile tries to buy its way out of the past

Georges Marion in Santiago

MORE THAN 100,000 supporters of Chile's Socialist government fled abroad when it was overthrown by General Augusto Pinochet in 1973. Many of them returned in the early nineties, but they did not feel at home: Chile seemed to have changed unrecognisably.

"In the old days Chilean society was no doubt less developed, but it was fraternal," says Anna, a former exile. "We stuck together, we believed in progress and in a shared future . . . All that has now changed."

Today Chile wants to forget the past by flaunting its economic success. Individualism and performance are the buzz words. In less than five years dozens of steel-and-glass office blocks have mushroomed in Santiago, ousting the mansions that used to lend the capital its old-world charm.

This once Europeanised country now looks more to the United States and East Asia. Businesspeople talk excitedly about the country's 6-7 per cent annual growth rate, thriving exports and entrepreneurial spirit.

The privatisation programme launched by Pinochet did not ease up under his democratically elected successors as president, Patricio Aylwin and Eduardo Frei. The national airline, railways and power stations have been sold off. They could soon be followed by roads, water and airports.

With private pension funds worth $27 billion, Chile can afford to be highly enterprising. It has even invested massively in Argentina's economy, now undergoing privatisation. The Chilean state has pulled in its horns to such a degree it now enjoys a budget surplus and can repay its debts in advance.

But all this dynamism carries a social cost: cut-throat competition has left 25 per cent of the population, including wage-earners, below the poverty line. The old ethos that it was the state's job to reduce inequalities and initiate development has been scrapped.

The state education system is in tatters. A chronic shortage of premises and teachers means most pupils do not get their full quota of lessons. Universities are of high quality — but exclusively fee-paying. Run-down state hospitals stand forlornly next to private clinics that offer the best doctors and the latest equipment.

Although the government is now apparently beginning to worry about the social repercussions of its policies, no one except the Communist party, whose influence is limited, wants to adopt a different economic model. The once revolutionary Socialist party has espoused mainstream economic policies and believes its future candidate has a good chance of winning the 1998 presidential election.

There is an atmosphere of silent schizophrenia. People keep quiet and pretend they have forgotten, so as not to have to face up to the past. The old divisions and their terrible aftermath of exile, "disappearances" and international opprobrium are seen as political events. Today's consensus and its beneficial effects — modernisation, rising living standards — are a purely economic phenomenon. The latest history of Chile, just out, charts the country's fortunes from its beginnings to 1973, but no further.

Frei is cautiously trying to eradicate the lingering traces of dictatorship, such as the special status enjoyed by Pinochet and the nine senators appointed by him.

"Everyone realises we're living in a peculiar type of democracy where there are limits that can't be transgressed," says a Santiago intellectual. It is a situation that generates enormous angst: a recent WHO survey of 15 big cities around the world showed that Santiago had the highest number of people suffering from mental disorders.

(April 9)

French doubts grow over nuclear energy

Dominique Gallois

THE IDEA — unthinkable only a few months ago — that France's almost exclusive dependence on nuclear energy may have to be reviewed is gaining ground in official circles. It has even been openly aired by the biggest fan of the atom, Electricité de France (EDF), the state utility that gets 82 per cent of its electricity from nuclear power.

The new thinking has been prompted by the fact that, barring an unexpected development, the risk of a worldwide shortage of oil, gas or coal is receding every year, and that there is mounting concern about the environment.

Compared with oil and coal, and so long as the use of renewable energy remains marginal, natural gas is increasingly seen as the least dirty of the polluting energies. Falling costs now make it even more attractive.

More and more gas-fired power stations are being planned throughout the world. They require little investment and offer high returns. Much used in the developing world, such power stations should gain ground in Europe too as the electricity and gas markets open up.

These developments come at a time when France's nuclear plant-building programme, initiated after the first oil shock in 1973, is close to completion. The next generation of reactors is not due to be built until 2010. Future decisions will hinge on the economic performance of each type of energy.

Up to now, the champions of a nuclear-only approach have pointed to the fact that nuclear energy costs 25 per cent less than energy produced by coal or gas, according to the latest industry ministry estimates of 1993. Those figures were criticised for underestimating reprocessing and decommissioning costs. EDF nevertheless continued to argue that nuclear power was the cheapest way of meeting France's basic electricity needs.

Figures due out soon are expected to show that gas is now highly competitive, since it costs roughly the same as nuclear power. The government does not, however, intend to abandon the broad lines of its energy policy of 1974, which aimed to guarantee energy independence through nuclear power, diversify energy sources, and keep costs under control.

The first of those three aims was achieved by EDF's massive and extremely costly investment in 56 nuclear power stations. The competitiveness of gas has altered the equation and will probably enable the two other aims to be achieved. There have been three reasons for the change: the inevitable internationalisation of power-producing companies, the opening up of the energy market to competition, and environmental concerns.

France and Japan are virtually alone in having gone all out for nuclear energy. The world's 430 nuclear reactors generate 7.5 per cent of its energy output, while oil represents 40.5 per cent, coal 26.5 per cent and natural gas 22 per cent. Use of nuclear energy is not expected to increase greatly in the future, except in China. In the United States and Germany, the image of nuclear power is still tainted by Chernobyl.

Power station manufacturers are increasingly being asked to produce equipment that uses fossil fuels — oil, gas and coal. The consequences of that shift can already be seen in the French nuclear industry. The government is trying to integrate Framatome, a state-owned manufacturer of reactors, into a group with wider-ranging energy-producing activities.

EDF, which sees the internationalisation of the market as one of its growth areas, wants to be able to offer all sorts of energy, not just nuclear. To be credible, it needs a showcase of highly efficient hydroelectric and traditionally fuelled power stations. But it has no gas-fired plants and has so far been reluctant to invest in co-generation projects that produce both energy and heat.

On the domestic market, EDF also has to allow for the ending of its production monopoly, as required by the European electricity directive that will open up competition in two years' time. Gas prices are also due to be deregulated. Many companies, not just Gaz de France but Générale des Eaux, Lyonnaise des Eaux and the oil companies Elf and Total, have already begun to offer industrial consumers the prospect of cheap energy.

The nuclear industry now realises the gloves are off. The decision to renew all or part of France's nuclear capacity will not be taken for four years. Energy prices may fluctuate in the meantime. Because gas deposits are concentrated in only a few countries, a crisis along the lines of the 1973 oil shock cannot be ruled out. Work is therefore continuing on the new European pressurised reactor (EPR), a more efficient and safer reactor due to replace those now in operation.

Any government has to listen to public opinion. Polls show that the French accept nuclear energy, but that they are more dubious when it comes to the treatment of radioactive waste. Although technological advances have made it possible to reduce waste volumes by two-thirds in French power stations, its radioactive half-life of tens of thousands of years poses huge problems.

Whenever a site is mooted for the burial of waste, the local population is quick to protest. EDF has chosen Carnet, near Nantes, as a possible site for France's first EPR. But since the final decision as to whether that power station should be nuclear or fossil-fuelled will not be taken for four years, the company has been stalling. That tactic, seen locally as an attempt to conceal the truth, has prompted violent hostility.

Under pressure of various kinds, France's established policy on nuclear energy has taken more of a battering in recent months than in the past 25 years. The end of the consensus will inevitably set off a chain reaction, even if that takes some time.

(April 8)

'Day after' pill changes hands

Jean-Yves Nau

THE German pharmaceuticals giant Hoechst and its French subsidiary Roussel-Uclaf announced on April 8 that they were handing over, "without remuneration", all their rights to RU 486, the "day-after" abortion pill, to Dr Edouard Sakiz.

A former president of Roussel-Uclaf's board and one of a team that discovered the anti-progesterone properties of the RU 486 molecule in the early eighties, Dr Sakiz, aged 71, will shortly form his own company to develop and market the pill.

RU 486 was approved in France and China in 1987, in Britain in 1990 and in Sweden in 1991. The drug, when taken in combination with prostaglandins, is 95 per cent effective. Several million women have used it to have abortions. The first controversy over the drug arose in France in 1988, when an attempt by Hoechst to halt its production and sale was stopped by the then health minister, Claude Evin.

"His action fortunately allowed women to invoke a form of 'moral ownership' of the molecule," says Dr André Ulmann, who was in charge of developing RU 486 from 1984 to 1996. "The German group's overall control hampered the product's development, particularly as we hoped to sell it in the United States. By 1990 several of us had concluded the best solution would be to take the product out of the group."

Rights to RU 486 were then offered to several firms, most of them American. But there were no takers because of the likelihood of its being boycotted by anti-abortion groups. In the US, where pro-life activists have called for a boycott of all Hoechst products, doctors "guilty" of having carried out abortions have been murdered.

"I'm obviously going to be a much easier target than a company," Dr Sakiz says. "I have a home and an address . . . But I feel it would be wrong to abandon such a promising molecule as RU 486."

(April 9)

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
April 20 1997

Heroes and villains

Nicolas Weill

Aubrac, Lyon 1943
Gérard Chauvy
Albin Michel 457pp 130 francs

GERARD CHAUVY'S Aubrac, Lyon 1943 is one of those books which, when they focus in detail on a controversial aspect of a person's life, are so scrupulously careful not to pass judgment that the reader is left with the difficult task of deciding whether a possible traitor is innocent or an apparent hero guilty.

Chauvy claims not to believe the alleged "revelation" by Klaus Barbie, Lyon's Gestapo boss during the war, that Raymond Aubrac, a Resistance leader in the southern zone, had been "turned" by the Germans as early as March 1943. Yet he lovingly maintains an atmosphere of doubt.

He categorically states that there is no documentary evidence to support the accusation of treason that Barbie levelled at Aubrac. "But it is a fact," he says, "that sometimes fanciful accounts have been formulated."

He seizes on incongruities, incorrect dates and inconsistencies in the many accounts and statements made by the now much-fêted Aubrac and his wife Lucie, whose joint exploits are the subject of Claude Berri's recently released film, Lucie Aubrac.

The contradictions centre on the crucial period in 1943 when the various branches of the Resistance were going through the painful process of unification, and the Gestapo, which had been in complete control of the southern zone since November 1942, was ruthlessly tracking down partisans.

Their hunt culminated on June 21, 1943, with the arrest of General Charles de Gaulle's representative, Jean Moulin, along with Raymond Aubrac and other members of the Resistance, as they met in the Lyon suburb of Caluire.

By merely sowing doubts and "clearing up" a few points, Chauvy goes either too far or not far enough. Readers will have to make up their own minds. Barbie's celebrated "will", whose existence came to light when he died in 1991, is published in full in an appendix. In it, he incriminates Raymond and Lucie Aubrac, even claiming that the latter telephoned to tell him where and when the Caluire meeting was going to be held.

One can only have deep reservations about the documentary and historical worth of the "will". Chauvy himself is doubtful: "This late document, which was drawn up by Barbie's lawyer, Maitre Vergès, is probably more his work than that of the Nazi officer himself. It cannot therefore be put on the same plane or have the same historic value as archives dating from the period."

Chauvy also draws on other sources to back up his claims, such as a report by the head of the Gestapo, Dr Ernst Kaltenbrunner, dated May 27, 1943. In it, thanks to details that Barbie in his "will" says he gave him, Kaltenbrunner shows himself to be very well informed about the Resistance. He refers to a mysterious special "agent" who had infiltrated the Resistance and secured an "important position" in it.

Access to other German sources, in particular the intermediate reports drawn up in Lyon that helped Kaltenbrunner prepare his report, would make it much easier to grasp the events of 1943 in greater detail. But such sources have yet to come to light, and may have been destroyed when the Gestapo's archives were bombed in 1945.

However, the book's extensive appendices of almost 200 pages, mostly made up of documents of the period, reports and depositions, suggest that it will eventually be possible to piece together a more accurate picture of the Resistance movement, some of whose members were shadowy figures.

One such was Jean Biche, undoubtedly a double agent, whose evidence leads Chauvy to contend that the spectacular escape of October 21, 1943, was organised for him and not for Raymond Aubrac — a very different version of events from that given by the Aubracs.

It is high time someone wrote a proper history of the Resistance and swept away the myths surrounding it. These have all too often been used to damage the memory of those who displayed true heroism.

Chauvy's book, by casting aspersions on one of the movement's most prominent survivors, is unlikely to bring us any closer to the truth.

(April 4)



Baton charge . . . Mstislav Rostropovich is the darling of the great and good

An overture for Slava as he turns 70

Alain Lompech

A HOST of celebrities flocked to the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in Paris on March 27, when the Russian-born — but now Swiss — cellist, conductor and pianist Mstislav Rostropovich celebrated his 70th birthday.

They included Prince Rainier and Princess Caroline of Monaco, Queen Sophie of Spain, the Prince of Wales, the Queen of Denmark, the Queen of the Netherlands, the presidents of Portugal and Azerbaijan, Italy's prime minister and a dozen royal highnesses from various countries, some of which are now republics.

Other famous names — musical ones this time — were on stage. Seiji Ozawa, Krzysztof Penderecki, Semyon Bychkov, Yehudi Menuhin and Marcel Landowski took turns conducting symphony orchestras from London and Paris, as well as the Orchestre National de France. Pieces specially composed for Rostropovich (Slava to his friends) were performed: Henri Dutilleux's Slava's Fanfare, Leonard Bernstein's Overture For Slava, and Benjamin Britten's Praise We Great Men.

It was not just a cellist who was being fêted, but Rostropovich, symbol of our times and a man of great integrity whom we love to admire. There was one notable absentee, however: Imelda Marcos, for whom Rostropovich has performed in the Philippines and in New York.

After more or less voluntarily serving the Soviet Union and then losing his nationality, Rostropovich became the darling of the great and the good. Posterity must surely recognise him as being greater and better than any of them.

There were melancholy moments, such as when the slim figure of Van Cliburn appeared on stage. The still handsome pianist, who was left scarred by the role United States authorities forced him to play after he won the 1958 Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow at the age of 24, addressed the audience with all the presence of a great actor, then dashed off Schumann's Widmung.

There was fun, and lots of it, when Peter Ustinov imitated an elderly German professor performing a cantata written by Bach at the age of two. He did all the voices and all the instruments, and had the audience in fits of laughter. Why didn't they take advantage of moments like that to do their coughing. Some people have a genius for clearing their throats at just the wrong moment, such as when the hugely talented Nathalie Dessay was singing Ambroise Thomas pianissimo.

There were moments of unexpected grace, too, as when Lucero Tena played the castanets, and others that were nail-bitingly tense — the pianist Hélène Mercier-Arnault was so nervous during Beethoven's Triple Concerto that she totally failed to match the energetic playing of cellist Natalia Gutman, who once studied under Rostropovich and can now safely be said to be on a par with her teacher.

Listeners of the France-Musique radio station heard the performances live, but no television channel saw fit to record the occasion.

The 400 students from Paris conservatories, whose seats in the upper circle had been paid for by a luxury goods firm, were applauded by the glitterati below. Elton John sat down at the piano to sing Happy Birthday To You. Rostropovich wept like a child. The man who habitually hugs and kisses everyone he bumps into seemed deeply moved, and blurted out compliments that sounded sincere: that evening, we had all been "wonderful".

(March 29)

Chauvy's book is 'sly and underhand'

Raymond Aubrac talks to **Laurent Greilsamer** and **Nicolas Weill**

WHAT is your reaction to Gérard Chauvy's insinuation that you and your wife, Lucie, may have been "turned" by the Gestapo?

His book prompts a more general reflection. During the Occupation, there was a constant struggle between Resistance fighters and the forces of repression. In many respects it was an unequal struggle. For example, both the Gestapo and the French police kept files and archives. They constructed their version of events, whereas members of the Resistance have had to rely on their own memories, which may be . . . inaccurate.

What particularly struck you about the book?

The charges it makes are not new. They hinge on a text by Klaus Barbie, who ran the Lyon section of the Gestapo. It should be remembered that Barbie left France in 1944 and was on the run until 1983. During all those years he made countless statements to the press — but never once mentioned the name Aubrac.

When he was charged by the French authorities in 1983 he chose Jacques Vergès as his defence counsel. After his trial, he wrote a 63-page document in which he incriminated us both. That's the centrepiece of Chauvy's book — Barbie's "will". The whole book aims to lend credence and publicity to that text.

Have you talked about the relevant documents with Chauvy?

No. Chauvy went about his task not like a historian but, at best, like a reporter looking for a scoop. He didn't treat the documents in a critical way, nor did he interview anyone. Yet he could easily have approached Serge Ravanel. We were arrested together in Lyon and shared a cell. And then there's Maurice Kriegel-Valrimont, who was present when I was interrogated by the Germans in March 1943.

Chauvy does not in fact make any charge. He says in his conclusion that he found no proof. So what's he playing at? Is he attacking the Resistance in general? I feel he is. He emerges as a sort of spokesman for all those who argue that the resistance fighters were liars who cooked up a fine story.

You were arrested twice in 1943. Chauvy hints that you were "turned" by the Germans after your first arrest.

Barbie's "will" indicates that I spent May 10-14 with Barbie working out how I was going to act as a double agent. Chauvy bases his accusation on a mistake I made over the date of my release. I said more than once that it was May 14, 1943, whereas it should have been May 10. He harps on about it. There's something sly and underhand about the book.

I was released on May 10. Later, I sometimes said it was May 12, sometimes May 13 or 14 — after the war I couldn't remember a thing. I hadn't exactly had an easy time of it.

Chauvy also deals with the Caluire episode of June 1943, when you and Jean Moulin were arrested. He mentions a contradiction between the identity you gave to de Gaulle's secret services in London, and later to military security in Algiers.

We all had three identities during that period — our original identity, which in my case was Raymond Samuel (something the Gestapo and French police never found out), a borrowed identity that matched our forged papers (mine was first François Vallet, then Claude Hermelin), and lastly a pseudonym, which wasn't strictly an identity and changed quite often. I called myself Balmont, then Aubrac.

I always worried they would find out I was Raymond Samuel, because that identity would have endangered my wife (who continued to teach under the name Samuel), my parents and others, and because I'm Jewish. That's something which, paradoxically, they never found out.

When the Germans arrested you in Caluire they discovered you were Aubrac, in other words an important Resistance figure. How did they react?

They just hit me harder and harder. To me, there's only one mystery in everything that happened to me: why did they keep me in Lyon? I've no answer to that question.

(April 4)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
April 20 1997

Hope of a getting a Strait answer

David Cohen on why China's return to Hong Kong is the hot topic for campus rumour in Taiwan

IN THE new library of the National Taiwan University there hangs a proverb: "The philosophers have long gone, yet their examples are still with us." To which many students and faculty members might well reply, "Oh, really?" — or Mandarin Chinese words to that effect. For at the university, wisdom of the ancients takes a back seat to the behaviour of the moderns — specifically, those currently living 150km away across the Taiwan Strait.

Taiwan and mainland China are players in one of the world's most intractable geopolitical stand-offs. Both formally claim jurisdiction over the other, but in practice the two have existed separately since 1949.

As Hong Kong counts down the months until Chinese rule on July 1, Taiwan's eyes are on the old colony. And nowhere is interest keener, or speculation more rife, than among the 326,311 students on the island's 51 university and college campuses.

Interest in things British extends beyond its soon-to-be-defunct territory. The UK is second only to the US as a destination for students from Taiwan, with Hong Kong often being used as a stopover point.

Wei-Jao Chen, president of the National Taiwan University, says: "We can't tell what the future holds, but it's the major controversial issue on our campus. Academics in Hong Kong tell us nothing will change, and I think they're probably right — at least for the next 10 years."

The National Taiwan University describes itself as one of the country's leading post-secondary establishments, an institution which, in the words of its latest yearbook, "after years of cultivation now has the appearance of an international first-class university".

Established in 1928, the university says it currently enrols 23,247 students and has a faculty of 2,773. It also enjoys long-established bilateral ties with two of Hong Kong's oldest institutions: the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Dr Chen expresses a Taiwanese ambivalence in considering the future of those fraternal relations. He hopes the incoming administration behaves as "a rational actor". But he adds: "We knew that if we didn't establish these agreements with Hong Kong before 1997, there may have been problems trying to do it afterwards. I'm not saying we trust China, but we recognise that any change to these agreements will not be in China's interest, so because of that we're confident that these relationships will continue."

He describes himself as an optimist, and sees academic collaboration as having contributed to the tentative goodwill between Beijing and Taipei, which had been warming since Taiwan lifted its state of martial law in 1987.

However, he admits that higher education played a part in the deterioration of those relations nearly two years ago, when President Lee Teng-hui delivered a speech at New York's Cornell University, his alma mater.

"It certainly added to the tensions," says Dr Chen, "but I think that it's something President Lee had to do. He had to go out and let the people in the world know about Taiwan. But no one anticipated the severity of China's reaction." Mr Lee's speech dwelt on Taiwan's indirect annual investment — via Hong Kong — in southern mainland China, conservatively estimated at $4 billion. Dr Chen adds to this the value of his own institution's intellectual investment in Hong Kong and, ever-so-quietly, in mainland China. His university has recently formed a fledgling partnership, principally at faculty-exchange level, with Beijing University.

Other issues loom right now. Average annual tuition fees throughout Taiwan have jumped by as much as 20 per cent since 1993. Universities must now raise 20 per cent of their own budgets — up from 8 per cent five years ago — through contracts with industry, increased fees and fund-raising ventures.

Northern Taiwan, where most higher education funding has traditionally been directed, now finds itself competing for a shrinking government dollar against newly instituted southern institutions, such as Kaohsiung University.

Dr Chen says that decentralisation has meant "some but not enough" freedoms for universities to set their own agenda, citing the cessation of compulsory military training for first- and second-year students as an example.

That last freedom could yet be tested if events take an unpleasant turn this year in Hong Kong, or when Macao reverts from Portuguese to Chinese control in 1999. For at the National Taiwan University, as for those 20 million others who uneasily call Taiwan home, the wisdom of the old proverb-writers cannot be entirely ignored. "Our life," wrote one, "is like a passing mist."



A Taiwanese student during a demonstration in Taipei last year against the use of pro-Chinese textbooks. Now students are showing a keen interest in nearby Hong Kong PHOTOGRAPH: EDDIE SHIH

The Department is a major focus for postgraduate study and research. A large graduate school with many students at Masters and Research level, the Department provides an exciting climate for study. Students bring many different perspectives and experiences and many come from overseas. They mix regularly with students from Departmental Centres, as well as the University's Centres for Development Studies, European Studies and African Studies Unit.

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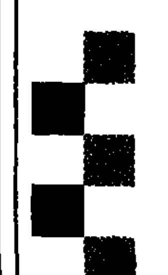
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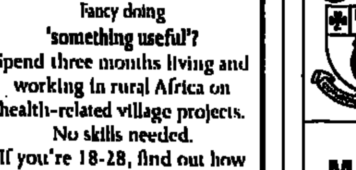
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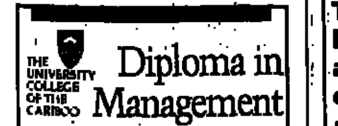
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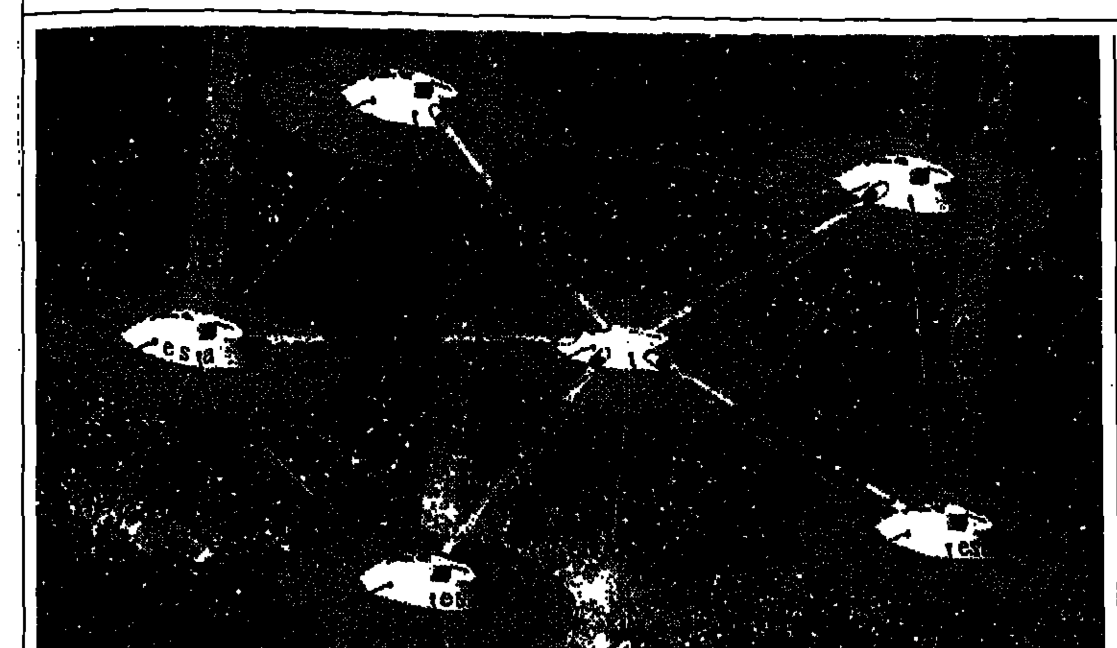
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The six telescopes of Darwin, which could fly in tight formation between Mars and Jupiter

Space telescopes search for life

Tim Radford

EUROPEAN scientists are about to reveal plans for a flying formation of space telescopes that could detect life on planets 50 light years away.

Astronomers think they have evidence of eight or nine planets orbiting distant stars — but these would be massive, Jupiter-sized objects likely to be hostile to life. Rocky planets with oceans and atmospheres are too small and too faint to be seen in the glare of stars.

But according to Alan Penny of the Rutherford Appleton laboratory, near Abingdon in Oxfordshire, the European Space Agency could launch Darwin, a collection of six infra-red telescopes flying in a tight formation, each collecting light and sending it to a central station. Together they would make a telescope 100 metres across. This would be sensitive enough to detect light reflected from a planet 40 or 50 light years away, and analyse it for telltale "signatures" of water or air.

Details of the Darwin mission were outlined by Dr Penny at the British national astronomy meeting in Southampton last week.

To work at all, Darwin's telescopes would have to be stationed to an accuracy of millionths of a metre. They will have to be based between Mars and Jupiter, far from the zodiacal dust of the inner solar system, which is itself bright enough to drown out light from distant planets.

"It's like looking up at the daytime sky and trying to see the stars," Dr Penny said.

Darwin will be 40 times larger than the Hubble space telescope, which has been detecting light from galaxies more than 10 billion light years away. It is one of two projects competing for European Space Agency support: if chosen, it would be launched in 2015. It would concentrate on 300 stars like the Sun, all within 50 light years of the Earth.

"Most astronomers agree that there is a fair chance that there are planets the size of the Earth around," he said. "No one has the faintest idea whether there is going to be life on these things. There is no plausible theory of how life actually gets going."

Dr Penny, who is aged 50, is unlikely to be working on the results by the time Darwin is getting the answers. "I will still be alive," he said philosophically "and the younger scientists in the mission will still be involved. All space missions take this long."

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

WE ARE used to British consumer boycotts but who is boycotting us?

AS boycotting began with the ostracism of the eponymous captain by the Irish Land League in the 1870s, and as the Union Parliament supported the captain rather than his tormentors, presumably those of us who still live under the rule of the Parliament at Westminster should regard ourselves primarily as boycotted rather than boycotters. For a more recent example, what about British beef? — *Brian Worth, Horsley, Stroud, Gloucestershire*

I HAD the impression that the adjective "unique" was an absolute. Is it now somehow "less unique" than it used to be?

THE usage of "fairly unique" is becoming increasingly ubiquitous, and the prevalence of unqualified absolutes, once so essential to our language, is today extremely minimal. People now seem to be fairly unanimous in thinking this very specific grammatical idea, hitherto considered highly necessary, is becoming more and more extinct. I have recently read of an "extremely invulnerable" aircraft carrier, and also of a "final ultimatum". While the latter may not count as a qualified absolute, it is rather tautologous, if not in the least ambiguous. My very central concern is that the highly current practice of qualifying to a degree an absolute is now so endemic that one would be most mistaken to describe it as wrong — *Terry Richter, Walderton, Chichester*

WHY don't we have ring-pulls on all cans and tins?

IN JAPAN, we can open most cans at the flick of a finger. Great when camping and you realise that someone forgot to pack the tin opener — *Debbie Hepples, Morioka, Japan*

CAN IT BE true that arthritic and tennis-elbowed women are starving their cats because they haven't the wit to open a ring-pull can with a tin opener (Notes & Queries, March 16)? — *J. Ruskin, Barnsley*

THE NAME Jerusalem means "city of peace" and Benidorm means "sleep well". Are there other ironic place names?

GREAT Britain — *D F Reed, Eaglescliffe, Cleveland*

I GREW up in Buenos Aires, which means "good air": true, perhaps, in the 1500s when it was named, but not quite the grimy, humid air I remember — *Alex Laidlow, London*

WHAT are the three greatest conspiracies of all time?

CHRISTIANITY, Judaism and Islam. — *Norman Temple, Edmonton, Canada*

Any answers?

WHAT is the evidence for St Brendan the navigator having "sailed the Atlantic and discovered the New World" in the sixth century? — *John Roycroft, London*

DEAF, dumb, numb, blind. What's the word for someone with no sense of smell? — *David Hughes, Toronto, Canada*

WHEN does a cult become a religion? — *John Desmond Moran, Solihull, W Midlands*

HOW thick are two short planks? — *Barrie Pepper, Leeds*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ

Letter from Japan Tony Skevington

Bloom and bust

IT RAINED for a whole day but the following day it was bright and clear, so I decided to take myself off to Ueno Park, one of the few large green spaces in this city of 12 million. I told myself it should be fairly quiet and the cherry blossom would be in full bloom. Wrong on both counts: the park was heaving and the cherry blossom almost finished.

It is *hanami*, the cherry blossom season, which lasts for about two weeks. Beginning in the warmer south in mid-March it advances northward up the archipelago, to finish in the northern island of Hokkaido in late April. Hanami has great emotional and cultural significance for many Japanese. It symbolises the transience of life: the cherry blossom blooms in all its outrageous splendour like a beautiful youth, but the riotous beauty quickly gives way to the green leaves of maturity and normality. Culturally, hanami has been depicted in literature, painting and dance for more than a thousand years, and is often used in films and TV dramas as a backdrop to ill-fated love affairs.

The last time I was in this park, under each candy-flossed tree groups of 10 to 20 people were sitting on blue plastic sheeting, eating and drinking, or simply parading up and down the wide avenues admiring the blossom. During the hanami season many offices close down for an afternoon so that their staff can go and view the blossom. They bring snacks, beer and sake, sit and talk, listen to music, or entertain each other on portable karaoke machines. As the afternoon progresses, people get drunk and begin to dance. No one gets out of order, they just quietly pass out and are carried off by their colleagues.

But this year I have come too late. Although many of the trees still have half their bloom, which falls like snow and covers the ground, I have missed hanami proper. There are no office workers under the trees, no karaoke singers, and no groups of middle-aged ladies (on parole from their flower-arranging classes) passing esoteric remarks on the merits and defects of the blossom. No, this year I am seeing another side of Japanese society. In Ueno Park today you can see what the long recession has meant to some Japanese: the army of homeless, which is growing in cities up and down the country. At the back of the park, away from the main avenues, the plastic ground sheets left by the office parties are being put to good use — to provide shelter for the homeless.

Many Japanese like to believe that they are different from everyone else in the world. One thing is certain, their homeless *are* different from their counterparts on the streets of European cities. To begin with, the Japanese homeless seem to be 99 per cent men. I don't think I have ever seen a homeless Japanese woman. The men are mostly middle-aged or old, they are not aggressive and they never beg. How they live I don't know, except that some Christian groups have "rice runs" distributing hot food.

RECENTLY, the city government tried to move the homeless from Shinjuku, one of the main downtown areas, to housing a long way from the city centre. A near-riot ensued as the police tried to move them on. It looks like many of them have decamped to Ueno Park. I counted almost 50 tent-like structures, some of them quite elaborate. Many of the inhabitants seem to have abundant possessions, washing and bedding hang on lines between trees, and cooking pots, chairs and cassette players are outside many of the tents.

I wandered back towards the centre of the park where people were feeding the pigeons (why not the homeless?). As I stood and looked on, a young couple beckoned me over and offered to give me some seed to feed the birds. They were tourists from Taiwan. "This is great," said the young man. "We can't do this in Taipei. We have no birds in Taipei. The pollution has killed them all."

If Tokyo is an ecologically friendly city, then everything is relative! It is getting dark and the park is emptying. The first drops of rain begin to fall as I head for the station, back to my nice, warm, dry apartment, taking one look back at the blue plastic tents that are beginning to glisten in the rain.

A Country Diary

J M Thompson

ROYAL CHITWAN National Park, Nepal: Tiger Tops tented camp stands on a beautiful, forested plateau in a remote corner of the national park, with sweeping views over tall elephant grassland and the River Reu to the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas beyond. In a small clearing in the forest, our walk-in tents were huddled around a tall thatched hut with a central fireplace where we ate and discussed the day's events lit by kerosene lamps but no fences or walls — this was the jungle.

We were living alongside a rich and diverse wildlife: Bengal tiger, leopard, gaur (the largest of the wild cattle), sloth bear, Great Asian one-horned rhinoceros, four kinds of deer, two species of monkey, two types of crocodile, 450 different birds, and, unlike most wildlife parks, we could explore our surroundings on foot. Each day our local guide led us through the dense woodland carrying his long pole to deter any threatening animal while we found a suitable tree to climb — guns are barred in the park. The most dangerous animal we could have encountered was the sloth bear — a long-snouted, furry beast equipped with wickedly curved claws, and possessing a completely unpredictable temperament, but we only found its footprints. Throne horned rhinoceros was another source of danger but we took the precaution of crossing its territory in the tall grasslands on the back of a docile Indian elephant which gave us superb, close-up views. The prehistoric rhino is also unpredictable, the male often reaching the size of a family car, but its armour-plated skin hides a small brain and terrible eyesight which has on occasion led it to charge trees and stationary vehicles.

Dance to a tune of terror

DANCE
Judith Mackrell

OVER the past decade, most new dance in Britain has been produced by groups dedicated to a single choreographer's work. But Ricochet, a smart exception, are a group of five excellent dancers with no ambitions to choreograph. Instead, they commission their work from outsiders.

As dancers, Ricochet grow sleek, supple and clever on a varied choreographic diet; as programmers, their astute, sometimes surprising choices give us revealing new views. I'd never imagined, for instance, that I would see work by Rosemary Lee and Javier de Frutos on the same stage.

Lee, after all, is best known for her large community-dance pieces, while De Frutos is notorious for the extravagantly personal solos in which he dances naked. Yet their pairing produces one of the most unexpectedly enthralling dance programmes I've watched in a while.

Lee's penchant for using untrained dancers isn't reflected in any lack of technical ambition, only in the calm thoroughness and imagination with which she explores her dance language. She conjures a rich, mysterious world that is curiously like those old ballets in which half the characters are under a spell.

She makes the dancers appear not quite human, permanently on the edge of becoming something bird-like, animal or mythic. Their shoulder blades twitch and their arms bent powerfully as if pining for flight; their eyes slide fearfully as if searching for the source of their enchantment.

They burst into flurries of stamping footwork, they fly on each other's shoulders in intimations of ecstasy; and when they pause, it's so intently that their nerves seem to quiver in the stillness.

But if the energy in Night Plain is driven, in De Frutos's setting of Les Noces it is plain scary. During the work's opening minutes the dancers pace the stage in total silence, so that when the first eerie, implacable note of Stravinsky's score splinters the air both we and they jerk on a reflex of pure terror.

Terror is the theme of the work — raw sexual terror. It was at the core of Nijinska's original unbeatable setting, but there it was contained within the ritual of wedding preparations. In De Frutos's version, it's stripped naked in trembling, agonised clutchings of clothes and genitals, blind runs and bludgeoning falls — visceral dance that is wonderfully disciplined by craft and music.

New lads feel the heat

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

THEY Think It's All Over (BBC 1) is like watching little lads in the playground. You wonder fondly if they will ever tire of whacking each other. Mostly Hurst and McGrath (see me after school) are teasing poor little Gower about his curls and threatening to set the school bully, someone called Vinny, on that nice little lad, Lineker.

You were not astonished to hear Gary say that Gazza put Deep Heat in the jockstraps at Spurs.

It is roaringly rude and funny and fast. Highlight of the night is the Feel A Sportsman spot in which two blindfolded contestants identify — last week — the British synchronised swimming team. Their tendency to stick a leg in the air was a bit of a giveaway. There is probably a serious piece to be written on the laddish backlash of Have I Got News For You, Never Mind The Buzzcocks, Fantasy Football League etc. The hell with that.

Fling your mind back in the direction of Twin Peaks. Remember the episode where a Norwegian delegation arrived to buy wood? Even by the standards of Twin Peaks this was a weird thing to do. Surely Norway has an embarrassment of wood. It struck me then, if it had not before, that there is something funny about Scandinavia.

The Kingdom (BBC2), which owes a great deal to Twin Peaks, is the name of a Danish hospital. Technically in Copenhagen, it inhabits that spectral territory which lies between the twin peaks, Loony and Spooky. And it is haunted.

This time the detective is a dottily determined old woman called Mrs Drusse with a lumbering Watson of a son. Give him a pair of horns and he could shamble on as Thorfinn Skullsplitter without rehearsal, but he is no match for his mother. "Do you understand?" she asks. "Erk?" he grunts confusedly. "Dear lad, always ready with a perceptive comment," she says and pinches his chubby cheeks painfully.

The plot is the sort you swallow with a gulp and glass of water. Mrs Drusse has heard the crying of a child, murdered long ago in the hospital, and has made up her mind to lay the little ghost. "Dr Kruger, her father, wanted to kill her to conceal his illegitimate child . . . It sounds far-fetched but that's life," she adds quickly, as if we had opened out mouths to say something. Kirsten Rolffes gave a dominating performance. It made you feel sorry for anything under 50.

The resident nasty is Dr Helmer, a Swede who despises all things Danish. I got the impression that Swedes think Danes are happy-go-sloppy and Danes think Swedes have no sense of humour. Other nations' enmities are always astonishing for the onlooker, who looks from one to the other . . . and back again . . . and can't tell them apart.

It's not every day you see something from Denmark. The language was disturbing like a face you ought to remember and don't. The sense was always a fingertip out of reach.

In the final episode the Minister of Health arrived for a singularly ill-timed visit. Mrs Drusse was busy botching an exorcism and a doctor was giving birth to a ghost's child. Lars Von Trier, the director, appeared wishing us an affable good evening. And adding that it looked more like a beginning than an end. A threatened sequel if ever I heard one.



Partners in porn . . . Woody Harrelson and Courtney Love in The People Vs Larry Flynt

An airbrush with danger

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

LARRY FLYNT, born and bred in the school of hard knocks, discovered early that the best way to stop being exploited by others was to exploit people's baser instincts as hard as possible himself. He is not an easy subject to make a film about, particularly if you regard him as some kind of hero for our times. But Milos Forman, Hollywood's premier Czech exile, has tried with **The People vs Larry Flynt**. And because he is a good director, he almost succeeds.

After an early start selling moonshine liquor, Flynt made himself first rich and then a millionaire by running the Hustler go-go club; and producing 'Hustler magazine,' a porno mag which made 'Playboy look tame. You could say that he airbrushed the sexual politics of the day out of it by claiming a woman's vagina has as much morality as her face, and then showing it in full colour. The film, however, has airbrushed any examples straight out again. If this isn't hypocrisy, I don't know what is.

At his first trial, Flynt was sentenced to 25 years for peddling obscenity and for links with organised crime, but was cleared five months later. Tried again for selling Hustler, he was paralysed from the waist down after being shot outside the courtroom and abandoned Hustler for Los Angeles and drugs.

Later, he ran Hustler again from his wheelchair, only to be sued by the equally appalling Rev Jerry Falwell for $40 million, after he ran a satirical Campari ad suggesting that the pastor had sex with his mother. Eventually he took his case to the Supreme Court and won. Free speech was thus given one of its most extraordinary victories.

Forman conveys this with the aid of a highly watchable performance from Woody Harrelson; staring with just a little evident distaste at the man while offering us his love for ex-go go girl Althea Leasure, who died of a drug-induced accident before she could expire of Aids, as a benediction.

It is a queasy affair since no one comes out of the film smelling of roses, though Flynt is also accorded the supreme virtues of obstinacy and courage that many a western hero evinces.

What we have here is a different, infinitely tacky America, defiantly waving the flag about freedom of expression, while never for a moment counting the cost. What about the freedom to be racist, for instance?

It seems to be with some relief that Forman details the love affair between Althea and Larry, extracting a notable performance from Courtney Love as the remains of an intelligent woman blundering through the last stages of her wretched life with her crippled but evidently fond husband. The court scenes, too, are ably handled with the aid of a screenplay from Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski that has the merit of being as funny as it is dramatic.

Forman reminds us that this was, after all, the era of Reagan and often corrupt evangelism, an age in which even Flynt might have seemed crudely honourable. It was also the era of feminism, about which very little is said.

For all its virtues of writing, direction and performance, the film still leaves a brackish taste in the mouth and seems very much less than wholly satisfactory.

However Forman manipulates what is certainly a remarkable story, it is difficult to avoid the feeling that he's ultimately fudging the real issue, which is surely the capacity for perversity of American society itself.

ARTHUR RIMBAUD and Paul Verlaine were both exceedingly odd characters, if talented poets. They were almost certainly the sort of people it was better to read than to meet and, if you are foolhardy enough to put them on screen, what you are liable to get is something clearly earmarked for the good old Romantic Agony genre.

One had, however, expected better from **Total Eclipse**. What with a screenplay from Christopher Hampton (taken from his own play), direction from the able Polish film-maker Agnieszka Holland, and acting from the likes of David Thewlis and Leonardo DiCaprio, you'd think something might stir.

But it doesn't. This is a daft, though momentarily intriguing, delve into their relationship which qualifies as a Very Bad Mistake, even before Hampton himself appears as a judge putting on a black cap and telling Verlaine (Thewlis) that buggers aren't welcome in Belgium. This at least raises a laugh where all else fails. And, believe me, all else does fail as the bisexual Verlaine, besotted with DiCaprio's nasty if pretty Rimbaud, is beastly to his wife (Romaine Bohringer), hopelessly jealous, interminably drunk, and generally so boorish that you can't believe he ever wrote anything halfway decent. Thewlis does his darnedest to infuse some real life into him. But this is naked, not Mike Leigh's Naked. My God, that film looks good in comparison.

As for DiCaprio's Rimbaud, he appears even more insufferable, pouting and preening his way through a turgid relationship like Romeo eyeing up the wrong Juliet. But don't blame the actors. This film was misconceived from the word "action".

Like Total Eclipse, you could say that Kevin Allen's Twin Town was also misconceived. But at least this Welsh version of Trainspotting — well, that's what everyone calls it, because it was produced by Danny Boyle and Kevin Macdonald — has a vulgar energy that carries you forward. Swansea, a "pretty shitty city", is the location for this determined slash at all things more traditionally Welsh, like choirs and leeks, as two young thugs terrorise one and all, two bent policemen chase them, and a corrupt local businessman has his daughter pissed over at a karaoke competition, and his wife's poodle beheaded and buried in her bed *à la* The Godfather.

Some of this is quite funny, especially the bit where two old biddies sell the terrible twins their prescription drugs and then ask for a bag of magic mushrooms. But there's nobody to like in the entire movie despite the often lively playing. The streak of Tarantino-inspired sadism is not leavened, as in his case, by either irony or virtuoso skill.

What we get instead is a baleful picture of a crumbling, hopelessly divided society, slouching towards anarchy with a silly, twisted smile on its face. Only the thought that Allen may make something much better one day keeps you going.

Jo Menell and Angus Gibson's Oscar-nominated **Mandela**, a combination of interviews and archive footage, wanders about all over the place, trying to make an ANC-authorised biography lively as well as not too hagiographic. There are good moments, almost all involving the man himself. But it's much too long and too pat by half. What a star, though.

Artful dodger returns

HE WAS the artful dodger of classical music, who recorded the biggest-selling classical album of all time, *writes Dan Glaister*.

But after enjoying swift success and huge public recognition, violinist Nigel Kennedy disappeared, retiring from public performance when still in his 30s.

Now he is back, giving a recital at London's Royal Festival Hall last week (*see below*) which was his first concert in Britain for five years. This will be followed by a rendition of the Elgar violin concerto in Hong Kong in June, to mark the handover of the colony to China.

Kennedy's 1989 recording of Vivaldi's Four Seasons had huge sales and paved the way for other mass commercial successes, but Kennedy's style went against the grain for much of the classical music establishment. His laddish ways and demotic accent, the suggestions of heavy drinking, served to set him apart. He even supported a football team, brandishing an Aston Villa scarf on stage, in the days before the Three Tenors smoothed the marriage between football and the musical classics.

The antics of the punkish Kennedy probably caused offence not only because of his talent, but because he was a product of the very system he snubbed. A child prodigy, he was packed away to the Yehudi Menuhin School at the age of seven. From there he graduated through the system before hitting fame — and fortune — in 1989 at the age of 32 with "Viv 4", as he referred to the Four Seasons. The recording sold more than 2 million copies.

The success may have gone to his head: he cut his hair, went on public binges, and famously trashed a Berlin hotel room.

The nadir probably came when he appeared for a recital of the Alban Berg violin concerto decked out in Alice Cooper-style black cloak and white make-up. He was persuaded to wipe away the fake blood trickling from the corner of his mouth, but it was all too much for the establishment.

Kennedy tried to broaden his repertoire, embracing rock and jazz. But while his classical recordings still earned praise, his more experimental work failed to find an audience.

And then, prompted by ill health, he decided to turn his back on it all.

He retired to the country, releasing occasional recordings but not playing in public — until last week.



Nigel Kennedy in the punk guise that was his trademark

Prodigal comeback with sounds ancient and modern

CONCERT
Andrew Clements

WHATEVER else Nigel Kennedy may have been doing in the five years since he last gave a concert in London, he certainly hasn't been neglecting his violin playing.

He began his comeback concert in a packed Festival Hall last week with Bartók's sonata for solo violin, and it took only a few bars of the opening movement to confirm that his technique is as secure as ever.

The Bartók is one of the most daunting in the solo repertoire, but there was no insecurity; every line was punched out with clarity and confidence, the shape of each movement perfectly caught. But then no one has ever questioned Kennedy's innate talent, only his temperament and mistrust of conventional concert giving.

After two movements of the sonata he inserted two arrangements of Jimi Hendrix numbers, then played the rest of the Bartók, and rounded off the first half with two more pieces of Hendrix.

The juxtaposition was repeated in the second half — an account of Bach's D minor chaconne, smoothly moulded without ever quite digging as deeply into the music as it might have done, led into a final triptych of Hendrix, ending with Purple Haze.

The Hendrix arrangements, with string quartet, acoustic guitar and double bass supporting his violin, were straightforward if rather soft-edged, and often lapsed into soupy sentimentality. Kennedy undoubtedly did some extraordinary things with the solo line, imitating many of Hendrix's guitar effects with great flair and ingenuity, but nevertheless almost all the grit was filtered out.

The snatch of The Star-Spangled Banner in In 1983 A Merman I Would Be just cannot sound the same without the Woodstock original's halo of distortion and feedback, and however well played, a violin is not capable of reproducing the scouring immediacy of the riffs in Purple Haze. Perhaps that's not the point. If there were flashes of a new directness in the the Bartók and the Bach, in the Hendrix he seemed to be putting up a façade once again.

Trumpeter with a quiet voice

John Fordham meets jazzman Kenny Wheeler

EVERYBODY wishes other people would see the subtleties we see in ourselves, without having to struggle to put them into words or deeds. But that doesn't cover the conundrums of self-expression that trumpeter Kenny Wheeler experiences. Wheeler's frustrations, it seems, are caused not by the blurred meanings and blank looks of most human communications, but by a sense of mystification at the world's fascination with a performer who doesn't seem to believe he has anything interesting to express.

It is a condition of life for the shy, 67-year-old Toronto-born trumpeter and flugelhornist. It makes no difference to Wheeler that he has also worked with some of the most illustrious names on the international jazz circuit, and that his instrumental sound is in constant demand. Perhaps it will also make little difference that he has just released one of the best records of his life . . . Angel Song finds Wheeler with three of the best and most adventurous improvising musicians at the more open-minded wing of the jazz stage — the legendary Lee Konitz on alto sax, Dave Holland on bass and Bill Frisell on guitar.

It offers a glowing four-way jazz conversation as delicate and subtly ecstatic as if the protagonists were intimate partners, rather than four cohabitees of a recording studio for one rushed rehearsal and a handful of first and second takes. The set is a surefire candidate for top jazz disc of 1997.

The mood may be reflective, but it isn't solemn or subdued, and the absence of drums, far from reducing the urgency, enhances it by simplifying the soundscape to enhance the players' abilities to listen and react melodically. They finish each other's phrases like long-time life-partners, and Holland and Frisell supply a rich underpinning that quickly makes the absence of percussion unnoticeable.

Sometimes Frisell makes intros sound like unaccompanied backporch guitar off an ancient blues archive, sometimes Konitz plays improvised lines as long and sinuous as his departed mentor Lennie Tristano's piano figures, or sustained high notes as pure as a violin.

"I can't usually listen to anything I play on," Wheeler announces in a soft Toronto burr that 45 years in Britain have hardly affected. "But I have listened to Angel Song a few times because Manfred [Eicher, the ECM Records guru] keeps calling to ask, 'Do you like it yet?'

"When he asked me who I wanted to record with, I suggested Dave Holland and Lee Konitz, because Dave and I have worked together a lot, and Lee was one of my childhood heroes. But I wasn't sure I could sustain a whole CD with a trio, and I'm a harmonic person anyway — I like to hear a chord there somewhere — so we added guitar. Bill Frisell has such a personal sound, within two or three notes you know it's him, and though my chords are quite big symbols with a lot of different things in, he seemed to simplify them and still let them sound as I meant them to."

Wheeler and Konitz appeared together at Ronnie Scott's club last year. Their melodic approach, which depends on long, winding lines and unexpected twists and skids of phrasing, was a near-perfect improvisers' marriage. "Lee really likes playing with no music there at all," Wheeler observes. "He'll say, 'You start this tune,' and you'll say, 'What tune?' and he'll say, 'I don't care, just start.' He's never been a hot-licks player, and I guess he never will be."

Wheeler left Canada in 1952, a fast learner who had started at 12 and studied harmony and trumpet at Toronto Conservatory. The jazz sources in the US were the obvious destination, but the military draft for the Korean war was still active — and within a few years of his arrival in Britain, Wheeler was John Dankworth's star trumpeter.

For a man of his reserve, Wheeler has embraced the most challenging extremes of contemporary jazz. There are extremes in his technique, extremes in his familiarity for the loosest and most tightly written of musical circumstances, extremes in his pleasure at working in, and writing for, the smallest and largest of jazz bands. If his ensemble writing has guiding lights, they come from Duke Ellington and Gil Evans. But in the end, Wheeler's beacon is improvisation — which, for a man of his uncertainties, is like finding peace on a battlefield.

Kenny Wheeler Angel Song (ECM, 1607) £14.49

Violence tolls for newlyweds

THEATRE
Lyn Gardner

LOVE'S YOUNG dream turns into a nightmare in Alex Jones's three-hander, a play that should immediately get itself sponsorship from the Noise Abatement Society.

Newlywed Black Country teenagers Becky and Dan move into their Housing Association flatlet with nothing except a TV, a font of optimism, and a baby well on the way. Jones portrays this fledgling relationship between children trying to behave like adults in touching detail: the banter and the bickering over whether the baby should be called Cathy, Serena or even possibly Asparagus, their futile dreams of winning the lottery, their mutual sexual attraction.

Abandoned by their own parents, who disapprove of the relationship, these babes in the urban jungle are themselves blessed to have found somewhere to live. "N'a babbie in me belly, n'a telly on the table. Am we lucky, or what?"

Actually, extremely unlucky. Before their first evening in the flat is through, the paper thin walls are vibrating to the sound of their neighbour's incessant music.

The great virtue of Mark Brickman's tension-inducing, teeth-grinding production of Noise, at the Soho Theatre Company in London, is that it never lets up on the torture. You begin to feel the same sense of impotent rage and helplessness experienced by Becky and Dan as they realise they will never make the noise stop.

Dan's attempts to get the music turned down are violently rebuffed, and it soon becomes clear that they have moved next door to someone a trifle less sane than Jack Nicholson from The Shining and with considerably worse taste in music.

When Dan is out earning a pittance to buy the forthcoming baby a buggy, Matt, the psycho neighbour, invites himself round for a cup of tea. Becky, who has clearly not been to the movies recently, foolishly lets him in. Before you can say Gold Blend it's attempted rape and not much later attempted murder.

Jones has a heavy hand with the all too predictable plotting, and an easy, light touch with the dialogue. But because everyone always says exactly what they mean, the play feels insubstantial, lacking in subtext. What you see — people with nothing except hope being beaten up by a violent druggie with nothing except despair — is all you get.

You know from the moment that they hump their pathetic belongings into the room what will happen, just as surely as you know that the babysitter has only 15 seconds to live in Nightmare On Elm Street. As a result, the appalling violence feels gratuitous.

Gideon Davey's set, with its drab little room skewed precariously at an angle, is a welcome visual nod towards expressionism in an evening that, apart from the curious set changes, seems to see naturalism as a virtue.

There are good performances from Samantha Edmonds and Graham Bryan as the fresh-faced lovers and Andrew Tiernam as the looming reality who kills the relationship stone dead.

Vision of a family man

Natasha Walter

Women and the Common Life: Love, Marriage and Feminism
by Christopher Lasch
edited by Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn
Norton 196pp £15.95

CHRISTOPHER Lasch, who died in 1994, was that rare thing: an academic who could frame his thoughts in lucid prose, connecting history and social science with everyday life. Whether he is writing about the culture of medieval courtship or the failings of contemporary politicians, he displays a restless intelligence. But feminists aren't supposed to like him.

The demonisation of Lasch stems from the publication in 1977 of his book on the family, Haven In A Heartless World. In it, he expressed nostalgia for the family as it was before the 20th century. Once upon a time, he told us, the family stood apart from the public world, unquestioned by law courts and social workers and therapists and — er — feminists. Did women and children suffer in that claustrophobic family environment? Lasch didn't care. What he cared about was the gradual loss, as women went out to work and experts took the family apart, of that "protective space", the "bastion of privacy" that was the family. In the seventies it may have been a book that swam against the tide, but now Haven In A Heartless World reads like a manual for leader writers on the Daily Mail.

Lasch's first posthumous publication, The Revolt Of The Elites And The Betrayal Of Democracy, moved on to more general ground. It was admired partly for its ability to take issue with everyone in its attempt to define the malaise in American democracy. This collection of essays, which he was working on when he died, returns to the themes of private life and the family.

In it, Lasch takes various opportunities to attack feminism. For instance, he tells us that the fight for female suffrage was merely a "middle class movement addressed to the middle-class woman's need for self-expression". But that was certainly not the case in Britain, where the suffrage movement crossed all class and political lines, and Christabel Pankhurst even expressed her unease at one point that the movement was so dominated by working-class women from the East End.

Or he tells us that feminism's apparently revolutionary success in helping women out of their homes and into work is a chimera, since in fact women in the 19th century easily "threw themselves into a variety of activities that took them out of the home". It's true that the movement to get women into public life began long before the start of Second Wave feminism; but it was still a movement that was underpinned by feminism. Feminists broke open the doors of the universities, the professions and the trade unions. Women had always worked, but until the feminist revolution got under way, their work was almost never a route out of dependence and poverty.

But despite the losing battle that Lasch is still carrying on with feminism beyond the grave, it is pointless to dismiss his work as "backlash literature". Unlike most male historians and social theorists, Lasch took women's experience and the arguments of feminism seriously. His work makes women visible, audible, and vital.

So he sometimes turns from attacking feminism into being one of its best defenders. Above all, he puts the case that women should not just pursue equality at work, but should transform the world of work in line with their needs and desires. Perhaps Lasch is at odds here with the most visible face of American feminism; but his ideas play in tune with the British feminist tradition. Contemporary feminists have demanded that we should, in Lasch's words, "challenge the separation of the home and the workplace" by seeking "to remodel the workplace around the needs of the family".

This vision is a vital one today, and Lasch's forthright intelligence reminds us why it should be so. No mere reactionary, he asks that ordinary women and men should take back control of family life.

"What the family needs is a policy on officials, designed to keep them in their place," he tells us trenchantly. That could serve as a mantra for Britain, as it moves away from Tory rhetoric about single parents only to meet a Labour party that seeks to move into people's homes to check on children's homework.

Thrillers

Chris Petit

Payback, by Thomas Kelly (Orion, £16.99)

SET IN the expanding contracting business of New York in the late 1980s, this accomplished debut tracing the fortunes of two Irish brothers — one mob muscle, the other trying to seek escape through education — is familiar enough, if not hackneyed, in synopsis, but distinguished by a watchful authorial eye, considered prose and canny use of autobiographical material: the author worked through college as a tunnel blaster — hence tunnelling sequences and descriptions of Bronx blue-collar leisure that have an effortless sense of being there, ditto the wise guy stuff. Impressive.

The Partner, by John Grisham (Century, £16.99)

GRISHAM as usual hits the ground running, with a fast story that starts with the end of a four-year search for a vanished lawyer, Patrick, who faked his own death and disappeared to South America with $90 million: cue the legal hoopla that's Grisham's thing. In less than 24 hours, Patrick manages to get himself indicted for capital murder, and sued for divorce and a total of $134 million. For anyone wanting to fake a disappearance, there's useful detail, but Grisham's revenant hero is a cipher and the did-he-didn't-he kill the body in his crashed auto soon palls. A literary Burger King.

The Third Twin, by Ken Follett (Macmillan, £16.99)

GOOD twin Steve is accused of rape while bad twin Dennis is in prison, a situation complicated by the fact that these identical twins appear not to be related. Are they by any chance the result of some hush-hush US government programme in genetic engineering? A cursory glance at the title renders much of the suspense defunct. Follett toes a PC line with a capable heroine, saddled with a recidivist father and a mother in care.

Fear of the Dog, by Neil Tidmarsh (Signet, £5.99)

A FIRST novel that takes the lid off the art world with enough verve and authority to suggest that the author is quite happy to bite the hand, etc. The Smoothie Cork Street dealer Tony Acton is so vile it's only a surprise that more people aren't queueing up to get rid of him, quite apart from the lugubrious Todd, artist and occasional forger. It all comes on like a cattier and more sociable update of Patricia Highsmith's Ripley, but set in the Nasty Nineties and a re-swinging London.

Goodbye Christian soldiers

John Julius Norwich

From The Holy Mountain
by William Dalrymple
HarperCollins 483pp £18



Lucine, far right, the last Armenian in Diyarbakir, Turkey, with her two guardians

FIRST of all, what a marvellous idea: to follow in the path of two monks who travelled through the Byzantine Empire in the sixth century collecting the wisdom of the desert fathers, hermits and stylites, and in doing so to look at the present state of the Christian minorities in those same lands. Few other British writers would have known about John Moschos and his acolyte Sophronius, or of Moschos's account of his travels, The Spiritual Meadow, which was one of the runaway best-sellers of the early Middle Ages; fewer still would have had the courage, determination and sheer hardihood to embark on the journey from Mount Athos and to carry it through, six months later, to the Kharga Oasis in Upper Egypt, staying whenever possible in the surviving monasteries and talking endlessly to their inhabitants; and none but William Dalrymple — and possibly Patrick Leigh Fermor — could have produced so compulsively readable a book.

The story he has to tell, however, is a sad one. Moschos and Sophronius, as they travelled between 578 and 615, were conscious that their world was in decline. Jerusalem was to be sacked by the Persians in 614, those of its people who survived the massacre being carried off as slaves; and, in 638, it was the fate of Sophronius, now the city's Patriarch, to hand over its keys to the Muslim Caliph Omar. Many of his fellow Christians feared that it would not be long before Christianity was eliminated from the world; but they were wrong. The Arabs, the Seljuk Turks and, later, the Ottomans were all, with few exceptions, tolerant of other faiths; and the Christian communities under their rule, so long as they preserved a measure of discretion, were permitted over the next 14 centuries not only to exist but even to thrive.

Now, that period in its turn seems to be over: as Dalrymple makes all too clear, the condition of those communities is far worse than ever it was in Moscho's day. Of all that he visited, only one seems relatively healthy: Mount Athos, which sounds in much better shape than when I was last there in 1963. For the rest, the outlook is bleak indeed.

He says: "Almost everywhere in the Levant . . . partly because of economic pressure, but more often due to discrimination and in some cases outright persecution, the Christians are leaving. Today, they are a small minority of 14 million struggling to keep afloat amid 180 million non-Christians, with their numbers shrinking annually through emigration."

In Istanbul, the Phanar, seat of the Ecumenical Patriarch, is covered with threatening graffiti, its windows almost daily broken by stones. In May 1994, a huge bomb was discovered within the main gates which, had it not been defused, would have reduced the entire building to rubble.

IN EASTERN Turkey, the few remaining Armenian monuments are being eliminated, while the Armenian people are being written out of history; in the south, the Syrian Orthodox Church is already practically extinct, its ancient monasteries evacuated and destroyed. The situation in Lebanon is scarcely less worrying: the Christian Maronites, who wielded effective power for the first 30 years of its existence, have lost their hold; many thousands have emigrated, and the balance on which the whole country depended has not been re-established.

In Israel, the decline is more dramatic still. The Old City of Jerusalem was 52 per cent Christian in 1922; now the figure has fallen to just under 2.5 per cent and is still sinking: "Christianity will no longer exist in the Holy Land as a living faith; a vast vacuum will exist at the very heart of Christendom."

Meanwhile the bulldozing of ancient Christian monuments continues. As one Greek priest put it: "Had we been Jews and our churches been synagogues, the desecration we have suffered would have caused an international outcry. But because we are Christians, nobody seems to care."

The two Middle Eastern countries that the author finds least dispiriting are Syria and Egypt — where the Alawite President Assad's coalition of minorities favours the Christians, who account for five of his seven closest advisers — and where the monasteries at least are thriving. But Assad will not last for ever.

Yet if the story is grim, it is told with an unfailingly light touch. Dalrymple is wise, too, with revealing insights into the close links between Islam and Christianity. But now bigotry is back, and the conclusions for Christianity are inescapable.

This book is available at a special discount price of £13.99 from Books @ The Guardian Weekly

City of the unceasing story . . . a tutorial at Al-Ashar mosque in Cairo PHOTOGRAPH: MELANIE FRIEND

Written from a life well lived

John Berger

Echoes of an Autobiography
by Naguib Mahfouz
trans Denys Johnson-Davies
Doubleday 126pp £14.99

THERE are cities that listen to and follow more stories than others. Barcelona, for instance, in comparison with Madrid. Berlin has more stories than Vienna today, Glasgow more than London. For me Cairo is a city with stories that never stop. Yet I've never been there, so if I believe this, it is thanks to Naguib Mahfouz. In this book of 120 pages there are about 200 stories.

Let's say it first to put it behind us: this book has been appallingly translated. So the top-writing is slack, lame and falsely pious, whilst the under-writing is tense, witty and sceptical. But the marvellous quality of the book survives.

The story-telling itself is fabulist, the narrative mode of an old man: "I saw an enormous person with a stomach as large as the ocean, and a mouth that could swallow an elephant. I asked him in amazement, 'Who are you, sir?' He answered with surprise. 'I am forgetfulness. How could you have forgotten me?'" And it is also very Sufist: "People came to me and said that they had decided to stand still until they discovered the meaning of life. I said to them, 'Move about without delay, for the meaning is concealed in movement.'" These two viewpoints, when combined together, produce something that Nadine Gordimer — a fellow Nobel Prize winner — calls in her foreword "wisdom". Yes. Though I don't think she likes the word any more than I do. Maybe Mahfouz is wise but, first, he is subversive.

Take the story called "The Cross-Roads", about a small boy. An aunt lived in their house. Often the aunt's son, the Bey (local governor), came to visit her. He came lightly and with grace. The house was happy. Once a week on Fridays another man also came to visit the aunt. He was down-at-heel and difficult, and the house was ill at ease. Yet the boy noticed that this man's features were like those of the Bey. Is he the Bey's brother? he asked his mother.

"'Yes,' she answered clearly, 'and give him as much respect as you give to the Bey'. He came to arouse in me even more curiosity than the Bey himself." This anecdote pivots on something it doesn't describe: the turning point, years back, when the two brothers took different paths. And here one is close to the cunning of Sufist narration, the purpose of which is to remind the listener that every moment taken for granted was possibly a turning point.

If one thinks of life as a book, the Sufist narrator surreptitiously turns the page to look ahead. With Mahfouz this happens so swiftly we can read almost nothing on the next page. We simply discover that it has already been written, and perhaps we register a single mysterious word. This, however, is enough to remind us that the page we are now living is not what we think it is.

These stories give pause because of their precision: their precision to life as seen by an old man. Nothing to do with precise information — there is absolutely no information, in the current sense of the term, in the entire book. Mahfouz's precision is that which is necessary for trying to touch what he loves: "The beautiful, attractive woman passed by me, sighing and with swaying gait, and I paid her no attention. In that dry time I took pleasure in the gratification of the pride of abstinence and of shunning worldly temptations. On a radiantly moonlit night I rushed at a bound to my true nature and sped after this beautiful, attractive woman, apprehensive of being rebuked for having shunned her, but she received me with a smile and said, 'Be happy in your fate, for I accept repentance.'"

My life as an outlaw

John Fowles

Robin Hood
edited by Joseph Ritson
2 volumes boxed
Routledge and Thoemmes Press
400pp £125

THIS was almost the first antiquarian book I ever bought — for a few pence, and by chance in its original edition of 1795. It is how I first met the celebrated outlaw's gang: Little John and Maid Marian, Will Scarlet and George a Green, Much the Miller, Friar Tuck and all the rest of them.

It is illustrated by Thomas Bewick, a jobbing woodcut artist from near the editor Joseph Ritson's North Country birthplace. If the name Bewick means nothing, the god of brigands save you. Bewick is how you enter the green folk secret of England, how you brush shoulders with William Blake and Samuel Palmer and many others.

But why reissue Robin Hood now? Thinking it absurd that such a common book should come at such a price (£125), yet show no modern apparatus at all about either Ritson or Bewick — or indeed about Robin Hood himself — I asked an expert friend his opinion. He told me of Bronson (his study of Ritson in 1938 is out of print, alas) and was sure the reissue would be because of Bewick. It seems the samurai-haunted Japanese are dotty both about Newcastle draughtsmanship and outlaws in the leaves.

All this began with Ritson's compilation of the endlessly accreted and complex folk myths about a seemingly 13th century bandit associated with Sherwood Forest in Nottingham and Barnsdale in Yorkshire. Ritson deals with, indeed creates, something very close (much closer than cricket) to the true soul and very heart of Englishness. If we ever had anything so absurd as a national religion, this should be its New Testament, its sacred text — not only spiritually, religiously and *ethically*, but artistically and culturally also.

I myself grew up as poor as a church mouse, ethically speaking. My parents didn't raise me religiously in any except a stock suburban sense — indeed my father was next-door to a total atheist. I was saved by this book and its great gust of practical — or socialist — common sense, with its two stark commandments. Suspect the rich, protect the poor. That good wind still carries me through life. Robin made perfect sense and so did the quasi-guerrilla exploits of his gang: their hatred of the clergy, of all uniforms and the pompously overdressed (mere appearance), the sharp irony and that marked sense of humour, mirrored in all our more serious literature, made me theirs from the very beginning.

To be sure, these guerrillas lived in a peculiarly mythical place. Never mind. Sherwood Forest always wore a heady odour of political honesty and general goodwill. In a word it was humanist, of added potency because of its simply iambic jig-jog, its peasant verse form. And then, when I bought my first Ritson, there was all that added weight of painstaking scholarship, academic pernicketiness, one of his endearing and well known peculiarities.

Like so many others, Ritson was not unaffected by the contemporary Robin-Hoodery going on across the Channel in his own time — the French Revolution. I should have liked to have seen his proleptic-sounding 1802 "Essay on Abstinence from Animal Fat as a Moral Duty" and his proposed proof that Christ was an impostor.

As a man, he seems to have been something of a spidery pedant, very prickly. Yet we must surely salute him for so basically and vividly raising all the dilemmas caused by the "eternal restlessness of history", not least here in England; for airing the constant quandaries of justice or those raised by that eternal trouble-maker in the revolutionary triad — freedom — and above all by the problematic status of outlawry.

For me, this charming if sometimes fusty medley of old images and old musics, the blend of balladry, Morris dancing, archery and esoteric folklore, the truly splendid learning, the stiff old woodcuts and the crabbed "antique" print, are overpoweringly redolent of a long-lost world. Somehow, despite the price and the profound indifference to uptodateness, Robin Hood hits the bull. It is profoundly English, the ore that has provided a host of fictions and archetypes to form a national reality.

Plain song of ordinary people

D J Taylor

Live and Learn
by Stanley Middleton
Hutchinson 248pp £15.99

RUSHDIE, Amis minor, Barnes *et al* were supposed to have finished off the likes of Stanley Middleton for ever. But, with postmodernism arguably as washed up as the Drabble-esque drabness it supplanted, Middleton's quaint English provincialism is still very much alive, and no less an authority than A S Byatt can be found on the jacket extolling his "exact vision of real things as they are".

It is no disrespect to Mr Middleton, or the 30 novels of his fecund career, to say that one knows exactly what to expect from a book like Live And Learn. From the homiletic title to the subsequent account of a young East Midlands academic and his solicitor wife deciding to get married and the incidental tribulations of work and family, it is a novel about "ordinary" existence.

Middleton's teachers, ministers and lawyers are admirable advertisements for stoicism, persistence, "making the best of things". Their tendency — slightly less admirable, it must be said — is to ruminate, to spend long half-chapters musing in a not very original way about God or the usefulness of academic literary criticism, or discourse on the value of their professional callings. A character can suggest, without the least shred of personal or authorial irony, that "A solicitor's life . . . is not a giddy round of excitement. It's mostly dull, but the work needs care. Conveyancing is not difficult; people have been known to do it for themselves, though I wouldn't think that's very wise for the majority. But one must be careful . . ." One must.

For all the common sense advanced in them — and it is difficult to criticise a writer who merely wants to tell us that life is ordinary — there is something painfully flavourless about these dialogues. The reader yearns for anything that might transcend the characters' experience rather than simply recreating it. Despite these longueurs, Live And Learn sustains its interest and contains one or two welcome surprises. I particularly liked Gormley, the lugubrious English don who decides to kill himself, dispatches suicide notes and then thinks better of it.

Norfolk's deer little aliens

Mark Cocker



ILLUSTRATION : ANN HOBDAY

A CASUAL glance and you could easily have missed it. The gingery brown coat blended perfectly with vegetation bordering one of the marshland dykes. Even when we got closer it remained unconcerned, raising its head just once to check our progress then continuing to graze. As it did so we could see the odd looking tusks that protrude from the upper jaw, which are one of the distinguishing features of a Chinese water deer.

This mammal is a true curiosity in the Norfolk landscape. As its name suggests its usual home is in Asia, and the precise background to its appearance in the region is something of a puzzle, since the only reported case of them breaking out from a local wildlife collection involved two males. But the fact of their escape, like their status on the British mammal list as an "exotic" species, is undisputed.

Chinese water deer also have a natural history befitting their anomalous presence in Britain. They are, for instance, one of the few deer without antlers, the males possessing only a pair of elongated canines to fight off their rivals during the rut. They are also exceptionally small creatures. The first one I saw, dashing across a road, I initially mistook for a dog. A full grown buck stands just 60cm at the shoulder, and the fawns are said to fall victim to predators as small as a stoat. Another unusual feature is the capacity for multiple births. While other British deer seldom produce even twins, water deer regularly have four young and litters of six have been recorded.

That reproductive potential may have aided its advance across the wetlands of East Anglia to a stable population numbering several hundred. Ironically, such apparent success could at some stage place this delicate deer in an ambivalent position, at least for environmentalists.

The conventional attitude towards introduced species of flora and fauna is negative, the alien's presence being seen as unnatural and undesirable. Often there are good grounds for these views, since exotic species have a baleful history of ecological disruption. Where brown rats have been able to colonise oceanic islands they have devastated the indigenous wildlife, which has usually evolved in the absence of terrestrial predators.

On a local level the classic example of an unwanted newcomer is the coypu, a South American rodent once bred on British farms for its luxurious fur known as nutria. After the second world war these beaver-like creatures escaped or were deliberately released and quickly flourished. And just as quickly they became a nuisance, radically altering their adopted wetland habitats and developing a taste for sugarbeet and other agricultural crops. It was only in 1986, after a campaign lasting several decades and involving the slaughter of tens of thousands of coypu, that the invader was finally declared extinct.

The Chinese water deer in Norfolk currently attracts no stronger response than casual indifference. The population is small and its spread limited by the deer's habitat requirements. But should their numbers increase dramatically, then they could throw up a fascinating environmental conundrum.

The wildlife habitats in the deer's native China face growing pressure from humans. It is conceivable that the water deer could eventually join two other Oriental species, the golden pheasant and mandarin duck — birds which have established stable feral populations in Britain but are becoming increasingly vulnerable in the Far East. Their survival, like that of the water deer, may one day depend on the aliens resident in Britain.

Chess Leonard Barden

AN IMPRESSIVE shared first place with Korchnoi at Enghien has made France's Etienne Bacrot — at 14 years two months — the youngest grandmaster yet.

When Bobby Fischer set the record aged 15½ by qualifying as a world-title candidate in 1958, it seemed that it might stand for ever; but inflation in Fide's titles and ratings, coupled with chess databases which enable young players to absorb vast amounts of theory quickly, have set the scene for a new teenage wave.

France's current No 1, Joel Lautier, has already beaten Kasparov twice, and now Bacrot's mature style promises even more. Don't forget that between 1700 and 1840 most of the unofficial world champions were French.

Bacrot v Rausis

1 d4 e6 2 c4 Nf6 3 Nf3 b6 4 a3 Bb7 5 Nc3 d5 6 Qc2 dxc4 7 Bg5 Safer is 7 e3 to regain the pawn. **a6 8 e4 b5 9 d5 Be7!?** The exclaim is not for Black's move but for his accompanying shrewd draw offer. The best time to propose peace is when your opponent is likely to decline and then regret it, as when a previously good position is starting to deteriorate. Bacrot needed only half points for his GM title, and now the position turns against him.

10 0-0-0 exd5 11 Bxf6 11 e5 Ng8! favours Black. **Bxf6 12 Nxd5 0-0 13 Nb6?** Winning the queen but losing the game: better 13 Be2. **cxb6! 14 Rxd8 Rxd8 15 Be2 Nd7 16 e5 Nc5!** After the routine Nxe5 17 Rd1 White fights on, whereas now 17 exf6 fails to Be4 18 Qc3 Nb3+. **17 Qc3 Be4 18 b4 cxb3 19 Resigns** If 19 exf6 Na4 20 Qxb3 Rac8+ and Black will be at least a piece up.

Fontaine v Bacrot

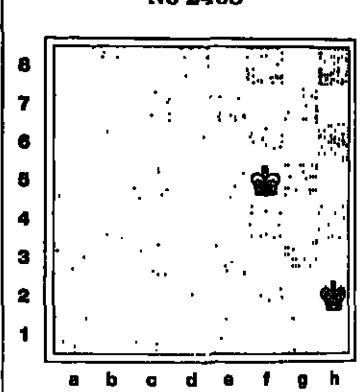
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 g6 A compliment to ex-world champion Smyslov, who often plays this move but who lost his match to Bacrot 5-1. **4 d4?!** Black now has a good version of the Exchange Variation. The critical moves are 4 0-0 and 4 c3. **cxd4 5 Bxc6 dxc6 6 Qxd4 Qxd4 7 Nxd4 Bg7 8 c3 Bd7 9 Bg5 h6 10 Bh4 g5** Expanding the pawn front increases the scope for Black's bishop pair.

11 Bg3 0-0-0 12 0-0 c5 13 Nf3 Nf6 14 Re1 Rhe8 15 Nfd2 Nh5 16 Na3 Bc6 17 Nb3 If 17 Rad1 Bxe4 wins a pawn. **Rxe4 18 Rxe4 Bxe4 19 Nxc5 Bd5 20 Nb5 Bc4 21 a4 Rd5** Typically for knights against bishops on an open board, the knights are in a tangle and Bacrot cleans up the Q-side pawns.

22 b4 Bxb5 23 axb5 Bxc3 24 Rc1 Bxb4 25 Na4 Nxg3 26 hxg3 Rxb5 27 Resigns

This was a nice professional performance by Bacrot; just the way to play weaker opponents in a tournament.

No 2468



This week's is a decidedly unusual puzzle, created by F Baird in 1910. White takes back his last move, then Black retracts his own last move. That leaves a position with Black to play; he makes a move, then White checkmates in one.

No 2467: 1 d5! exd5 2 cxd5 Qd7 (Qxd5? 3 Rd2 Qxb3 4 Rxd8+ and 5 axb3) 3 d6+ Qf7 (if Kh8 4 Re7) 4 Rc7 Qxb3 5 axb3 Rd7 6 Bxf6 gxf6 7 Rec1 with the winning threat 8 Rxd7 Rxd7 9 Rc8+ 7 10 Rc7+.

Quick crossword no. 362

Across

5 Deterrent to birds (9)
8 Power network (4)
9 Liable to change quickly (8)
10 Walking frame (6)
11 Long narrow container or area (6)
13 Calm (6)
15 Ingeniously cunning (6)
16 Legislative body (8)
18 Present (4)
19 Identifiable authorisation (9)

Down

1 University teacher etc — immaterial! (8)
2 Motorist or club (6)
3 South American cat or its fur (6)
4 Entertainer — large number! (4)
6 No good — barren (9)
7 Pole to show one's colours (9)
12 Greenhouse attached to mansion (8)
14 Show to be unjustifiably esteemed (6)
15 Prairie wolf (6)
17 Way out (4)

Last week's solution

HAWK FLAGSHIP
O A K I A A A
MASTIFF MIMIC
E T R E U M E
GUESS POTION
A C R C F
MISCHIEFMAKER
E H S I I
BUBBLE SWING
E F L R E D H
MUFTI VERDICT
I L S E E O E
TREASURY AMEN

Bridge Zia Mahmood

EVERYBODY in the club could see that H was in a great mood. In fact H — who is more commonly known as the Bridge Partner From Hell — was bubbling over with bonhomie. With an arsenal of newly devised psychic bids waiting to explode under a terrified partner, H was in his element. Why, only a few deals ago, he had opened three spades without looking at his hand!

When his opponents unsportingly looked at theirs and doubled him for a 500-point penalty, H was unrepentant. "They could have made three clubs," he explained. You might think that even H would have difficulty finding cause for satisfaction in the unusual score of −1,800 that he had just incurred through defending 3NT redoubled with two overtricks. But since the bemused declarer had unwisely played H to have something for his "lead-directing double", he had taken only 11 tricks instead of the possible 12, and been sharply reprimanded by dummy. The psychological edge this gave H's side was, he reckoned, easily worth the points sacrificed to obtain it. Beaming happily, H picked up this hand:

♠J 10 4 3 ♥A ♦5 3 ♣A K Q J 10 9

In H's methods, this was, of course, a standard opening bid of 1NT. After all, he had the requisite 15-17 high-card points, and the club suit looked useful for a no trump contract. The bidding continued:

South H	West	North	East
1NT	4♥	Pass	Pass
?			

What action would you take now? Of course, you would not have been in this ridiculous position in the first place, since you would have opened one club like a human being.

But try, if you can bear it, to peer into the twisted mind of the Partner From Hell, and see if you can come up with his choice of call. Pass, did you say? You are not trying, are you? That would be a rational thing to do. Five clubs, which you might conceivably venture, is also too sensible a call to bear the true diabolical stamp. I'm sure you're ahead of me by now. "Four spades," said H, and the auction went ballistic. West bid five hearts, North bid five spades, East bid six hearts and H, with the air of a man putting the finishing touches to a masterpiece, bid six spades. West doubled — H, as you may imagine, does not play many contracts undoubled — and this was the full deal:

North
♠K Q 9 8
♥6 5 2
♦J 10 9 6 4
♣7

West
♠A
♥K Q J 10 9 8 7
♦K Q 8 2
♣5

East
♠7 6 5 2
♥4 3
♦A 5
♣8 6 4 3 2

South
♠J 10 4 3
♥A
♦5 3
♣A K Q J 10 9

Everyone had pretty much taken leave of their senses by the time the six level was reached, but that is precisely the atmosphere in which H delights. West led the king of hearts, which H won to lead a trump. "Knowing" that South had another heart for his 1NT opening, West tried to cash the queen of hearts. H ruffed, crossed to the nine of spades in dummy, ruffed another heart, drew trumps and claimed his contract. "Sorry, partner," he said. "I ought to have redoubled." ©

Football FA Cup semi-final: Chesterfield 3 Middlesbro 3

Chesterfield keep the dream alive with a fine performance

Martin Thorpe

THIS was very nearly the greatest FA Cup tie in the competition's 125 years. In the end it had to make do with being one of the greatest.

Put together for £320,000, the fourth-oldest club in the world were 20 minutes away from beating a Middlesbrough side that cost £21 million to become the first team from outside the top two divisions to play in an FA Cup final. And had the referee David Elleray not controversially ruled out what appeared a good Chesterfield goal when the Spireites were 2-1 up at Old Trafford, they probably would have achieved that.

In the 68th minute Howard found himself free in the area with the ball at his feet. He turned smartly and hammered a shot that hit the bar and came down over the line. To everyone's surprise Elleray blew for an infringement, but no one was clear what the offence was.

But Middlesbrough's escape was not all about good fortune. Ravanelli and Juninho have shown the doubters since they joined the club that they really are prepared to sweat as well as swagger. Having been 2-0 down after 60 minutes, they helped to pull their shell-shocked side to 2-2 after 90 minutes and one goal ahead with only one minute of extra-time remaining.

Chesterfield had given everything and looked dead on their feet. Then Beaumont, a late substitute, hoisted a last hopeful long ball into the Boro area. Kevin Davies, Chesterfield's biggest threat all afternoon, jumped with a defender and the ball fell to Jamie Hewitt on the penalty spot.

With one last summoning of will the defender leapt higher than the red shirts around and steered a looping header past the flat-footed goalkeeper Roberts into the top corner.

It is Hewitt's 30th birthday on May 17, the day of the cup final, and he made sure that Chesterfield at least have a chance of being there to play Chelsea. They must replay this fixture at Hillsborough on April 22.

● In the Scottish Cup semi-finals, Celtic were held to a 1-1 draw by Falkirk, and Kilmarnock and Dundee United drew 0-0.

Athletics London Marathon

McColgan loses at last gasp

Stephen Bierley

MARATHONS always produce their own peculiar interior dramas; unseen, private battles against pain, mental torment, and downright exhaustion.

The event, by definition, is a prolonged slog. Yet last Sunday's London Marathon, in both the men's and women's races, produced finishes of such pulsating, last-gasp excitement that those watching felt almost as emotionally and physically drained as the runners.

Liz McColgan, winner last year, looked out of contention with a couple of miles remaining. In the end, after an outstandingly brave run, she lost by little more than a heartbeat to Kenya's Joyce Chepchumba.

It seemed scarcely possible that the men's race could emulate such an extraordinary finish, yet it was a near mirror image with Portugal's Antonio Pinto, winner in 1992, outsprinting Stefano Baldini of Italy to win by two seconds.

Baldini, the world half-marathon champion, looked to have timed his own move to perfection but Pinto, who charged through the final few miles at a pace that almost defied belief, was not to be denied, winning in a course record of 2hr 07min 55sec.

McColgan: heartbroken

This was a morning born for fast running, radiant spring sunshine being tempered by a cool airflow, although with only a hint of a breeze. The first four men were all inside the old record of 2:08.16 set by Britain's Steve Jones 12 years ago. The first British man to cross the line was Richard Nerurkar, who came fifth.

Chepchumba and McColgan both ran their fastest marathons. For McColgan, however, the race began badly. "I was having pains in my stomach, and therefore could not take all the drinks I would normally have during a race. After 18 miles I thought I would be lucky to be in the top five — but the crowd were fantastic."

The 33-year-old Scot was, none the less, bitterly disappointed afterwards. She had her heart and mind set on a second successive victory in the capital but Chepchumba, second to McColgan last year by more than two minutes, edged her out in the last few agonising strides.

McColgan's cheeks were still stained with tears two hours after the finish. "I felt I let the crowd down," she said.

Wimbledon 0 Chelsea 3

Zola power destroys Dons

David Lacey

THE short outwitted the long and the tall at Highbury last Sunday as Chelsea reached their fifth FA Cup final, and their second in four seasons, to leave Wimbledon with nothing but a field of wistful dreams.

The all-round craftsmanship of Gianfranco Zola, aided by the marksmanship of Mark Hughes and the footballing sagacity of Dennis Wise, not only brought Chelsea a decisive victory but rescued the day's first semi-final from scrappy mediocrity. In the end Wimbledon could not live with the skill and vision that these players brought to Chelsea's football.

Hughes gave Chelsea the lead shortly before half-time and scored their third goal in the game's dying seconds. In between times Zola virtually put the contest beyond Wimbledon's reach with a piece of artistry that had the losers' manager Joe Kinnear observing that "the hallmark of a great player is producing the goods when it matters, and he did just that".

So Ruud Gullit will lead out Chelsea at Wembley on May 17; a Chelsea team, moreover, who should be in a more sanguine frame of mind than the relatively limited side that lost 4-0 to Manchester United in the 1994 final.

Sunday's match belonged largely to Zola. After an anonymous start he became a steadily growing influence. Earle had gone close a couple of times for Wimbledon, but it was Leboeuf's long pass to Zola, three minutes before half-time, which swung the game in Chelsea's favour.

With exquisite timing the Italian held the ball until he could release Wise to his left. With Sullivan beaten, Kimble got in front of Burley as the cross dipped towards the net, but his clearance was chested down by the incoming Hughes, who then scored from close range.

The match was always Chelsea's after that. Three minutes past the hour Wise and Di Matteo worked the ball in to Zola, who threw off Blackwell with a deft turn before firing low past Sullivan.

Hughes completed Wimbledon's miserable day with a shot into the roof of the net.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP Arsenal 2 Leicester City 0; Blackburn Rovers 2 Manchester Utd 3; Derby County 2 Aston Villa 1; Everton 1 Spurs 0; Sheffield Wed 1 Newcastle 1; Southmptn 2 West Ham 0; Sunderland 1 L'pool 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Man Utd (played 33, points 66); 2, Arsenal (34-63); 3, Liverpool (33-63).

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE First Division Barnsley 4 Charlton 0; Birminghm 1 Huddersfield 0; Bolton 4 Oxford 0; Norwich 2 Stoke 0; Portsmth 1 Tranmere 3; Port Vale 3 Oldham 2; QPR 3 Grimsby 0; Reading 2 Wolves 1; Sheff Utd 3 Crystal Palace 0; Southend 1 Bradford 1; Swindon 0 Ipswich 4; WBA 1 Man City 3. **Leading positions:** 1, Bolton (43-93); 2, Barnsley (41-73); 3, Wolves (42-69).

Second Division Blackpool 2 Bury 0; Bournemth 2 Gillingham 2; Crewe 1 Bristol R 0; Millwall 0 Plymouth 0; Notts Co 1 Wycombe 2; Peterboro 2 Preston 0; Shrewsbry 0 Wrexham 1; Stockport 1 Burnley 0; Walsall 3 Luton 2; Watford 4 York 0. Monday: Stockport 1 Watford 0 **Leading positions:** 1, Bury (41-73); 2, Brentford (41-71); 3, Luton (41-69).

Third Division Brighton 1 Wigan 0; Cardiff 1 Chester 0; Exeter 3 Lincoln 3; Fulham 0 Northmptn 1; Hartlepool 0 Cambridge 2; Leyton O 2 Doncaster 1; Rochdale 2 Darlington 0; Scarboro 1 Hereford 1; Sc'thorpe 2 Hull 2; Torquay 1 Barnet 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Wigan (44-81); 2, Fulham (43-80); 3, Carlisle (43-78).

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE Premier Division Dunfrmline 1 Hibs 1; Hearts 0 Aberdeen 0; M'thwell 5 Raith 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Rangers (32-74); 2, Celtic (32-66); 3, Dundee Utd (32-56).

SCOTTISH LEAGUE First Division Airdrie 2 Dundee 0; East Fife 1 Morton 4; Partick 0 St Johnstn 4; St Mirren 1 Clydebank 0. **Leading positions:** 1, St Johnstn (32-68); 2, Airdrie (32-58); 3, St Mirren (32-52).

Second Division Ayr 2 Stenhsmr 1; Brechin 1 Livingston 0; Dumbarton 2 Clyde 0; Hamilton 2 Stranraer 1; Queen Sth 2 Berwick 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Ayr 2 (32-69); 2, Hamilton (32-66); 3, Livingston (32-57).

Third Division Alloa 1 Ross Co 1; Arbroath 1 Montrose 1; Forfar 1 E Stirling 0; Queens Pk 2 Cowdnbth 1; Inverness CT 4 Albion 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Inverness CT (32-73); 2, Forfar (32-57); Ross Co (32-57).

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

It's agony on the Euro front

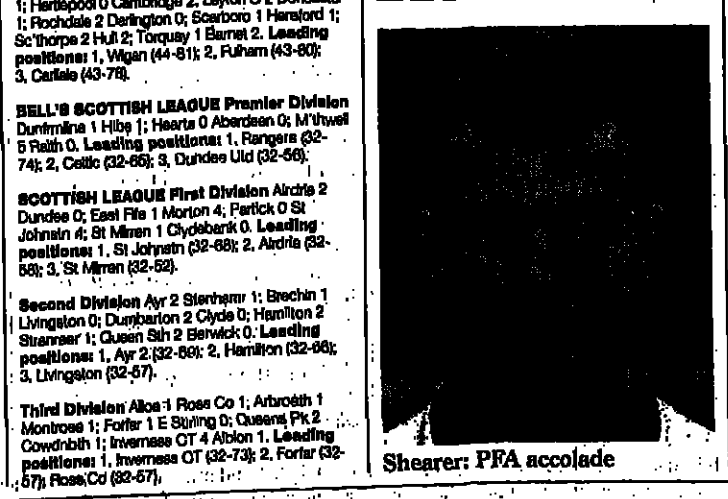
BOTH the English clubs still engaged in European expeditions suffered disappointment in midweek. Manchester United went down in Germany while springtime in Paris held no romance for Liverpool.

United lost 1-0 to Borussia Dortmund in the European Cup semi-final, first leg, at a packed Westfalenstadion. René Tretschok struck for the Germans in the 76th minute.

While the result need not spell the end of United's European hopes, Liverpool will need a minor miracle if they are to do anything other than slip meekly out of the Cup Winners' Cup when they meet Paris St Germain in the second leg of their semi-final tie at Anfield on April 24.

The Merseysiders suffered a 3-0 humiliation in Paris and their manager, Roy Evans, was scathing in his assessment of the team's performance. "You can't defend like that in Europe and expect to get a result," he said.

ALAN SHEARER became only the second footballer, after Mark Hughes, to be named Players' Player of the Year twice in his career. The Newcastle and England striker picked up the award at the Professional Footballers' Association dinner in London. Manchester United's David Beckham was named the PFA Young Player of the Year and was second to Shearer in the senior honour.



Shearer: PFA accolade

CARLISLE United, relegated last season, bounced back into the Second Division after a goalless draw at Mansfield last week. Joining them will be Wigan and Fulham, which earlier clinched promotion from the Third Division. Wigan recorded a 1-0 victory over Colchester, while Fulham's 0-0 game at Mansfield gave them the one point they needed.

MICHAEL DOOHAN, Australia's 500cc world motor-cycling champion, launched his campaign for a fourth successive title by winning the Malaysian Grand Prix at Shah Alam last Sunday. He finished the race in 47 minutes 11.545 seconds, beating his Honda team-mate Alex Criville of Spain by 11 seconds. Japan's Nobuatsu Aoki, also on a Honda, finished third, more than 13 seconds behind Doohan.

MARY SHARKEY has been appointed Wigan Warriors' new manager. Currently club secretary at Central Park, she takes over from Joe Lydon who resigned on New Year's Eve. Sharkey, aged 33, is the first woman to be chosen to manage an English rugby club in the Super League. She said of her appointment: "It's brilliant news. The board have put their faith in me and repaid the loyalty that I've shown. The board will do the buying and selling of players and my role will be to carry out the administration side."

GROUP 4 won the fourth leg of the BT Global Challenge when the 67-foot steel yacht reached Cape Town 25 minutes ahead of Concert, after 6,3000 miles. The 14 remaining craft in the race, which began on September 29 at Southampton, had left Sydney on March 2. Toshiba Wave Warrior came in third, four hours after Concert.

RYAN RHODES added the IBF inter-continental light-middleweight belt to his collection when he stopped Lindon Scarlett in the first-round at Sheffield. The British boxing champion defeated his opponent in just two minutes 54 seconds. Meanwhile in London, David Starie maintained his unbeaten record in taking the vacant British middleweight title. The 22-year-old from Bury St Edmonds outclassed the former champion Sam Storey, from Belfast, and the referee stopped the fight in the seventh round. It was Starie's 14th professional victory.

BANGLADESH scored 15 runs in the final over to beat Kenya by two wickets in the ICC Trophy qualifying tournament for the cricket World Cup, to be played in England in 1999. They had been set a revised target of 166 in 25 overs after stoppages for rain in Kuala Lumpur.

Scotland recorded a historic 46-run victory over Ireland to earn themselves a place in the Cup. Their match was reduced to 45 overs by rain and the Scots managed only 187 for eight. But their determined bowlers fully exploited the damp and overcast conditions to dismiss Ireland for 141.

On Monday, Mike Atherton was reappointed as England's captain for this summer's Ashes series and one-day internationals against the Australian touring side.